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THEODORA:

A HOME STORY.

BY

PHEBE F. McKEEN,

AUTHOR OF "THORNTON HALL," ETC.

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THEODORA:

A HOME STORY.

I.

AN INDIGNATION MEETING.

THERE was never a more unanimous political meeting. The audience kindled to wrath, or melted in pity at the will of the speaker; and believed that if the world could hear him, the world would be done with injustice forever.

The scene was a large old woodshed; the orator, a boy eleven or twelve years old, mounted on a chopping-block; the audience, a girl some two years younger. The business of this boy, in the shed, was splitting wood; that of the girl, picking up chips; but when the interests of the nation are at stake, what patriot is content to waste his strength on senseless things? Not one twelve years old!

While the speech was still in full flow, the mother of the children came from the sitting-room to the kitchen to make a fire under the tea-kettle; finding the wood and chips not yet ready, she looked out into the shed for her helpers. They were too intent to notice her, and she stood, for a moment, watching them with an amused smile.

It was a friendly-looking old shed, filled with a faint

forest fragrance. The sticks of wood piled from floor to rafters had not yet forgotten that they were branches of trees. Even here, in their prison, they had found out that Spring was come, sap was oozing from their severed veins, sweet gums from their bark; the green and grey lichens that clung about them, faithful to the death, were still pretty as in the woods. At the back of the shed, an open door showed a sweet picture of meadows, and river, and wooded hills beyond.

In this door, little Theodora was sitting, her chip-basket forgotten beside her, and her blue eyes full of responsive fire, fixed on her brother's glowing face, as he shouted at the wood-pile in front of him, with a gesture of defiance:

"Will ye'r bloodhounds snuff their prey in this mountain air? Will ye drag ye'r victims from our altars and our fires? No, sir! Not if this is the land of the free or the home of the brave!" At this point, the door creaked and the young orator caught sight of his mother. Instantly, he struck a new attitude, and without the glimmer of a smile except in his roguish brown eyes, went on.

"Ha! the pursuer is already at our doors! Ye sons of freedom, wake to glory!"

The mother laughed, but broke in upon his eloquence.

"Come, children! Business before pleasure. We shan't have any fires for your victims to be dragged from, if you don't bestir yourselves."

Donald jumped down, laughing, from his rostrum, and seizing the ax, went to work vigorously, while his sister searched for the driest chips to fill her basket.

Presently a knotty stick refused to be split.

"Aha, old fellow! do you think you are a match for me? Not by a long shot. Oh, see here, Theodora! This

is Turnus and I am Æneas; you are picking up the wounded, you know. I shall swing my battle-axe three times around my head and then you'll see how I shall split his skull open."

The little sister looked on admiringly while her hero swung his battle-axe three times around his head, but alas for glory! as it descended on the stubborn head of the foe, it glanced and struck into the foot of the conqueror. He merely exclaimed, "Hullo!" but his red cheeks paled, and his brows knit with pain.

"Oh, did you hurt you?" cried Theodora, springing to his side, her face full of concern.

"Rather think I did," answered the brother, limping to a log and sitting down. To her horror, the little girl saw blood oozing through the cut in his boot, and started toward the door, saying:

"I will run for mother."

"No; it will frighten her. I can go in now."

Putting his hand on her shoulder, he hobbled into the kitchen and sat down in the first chair he could reach.

"Now you may go and find mother," he said, "and tell her I have hurt my foot a little. Don't scare her about it."

In a moment the mother was there, her heart quaking at visions of lock-jaw and amputation, but none the less firmly and quickly taking off the cut boot and stocking, and bathing the bleeding gash. Theodora ran, as she was bid, for the sticking-plaster, the roll of old linen, the scissors, and needle, thread, and thimble, and felt that she had an important share in dressing the wound. She stood by while her mother closed the gap with strips of plaster and wound the long bandage around and sewed it. She noted the cheery little remark she made as she went

along, and how she put her arms around Donald's shoulders and kissed him, when she was through, saying:

"You will be more careful, next time, my dear."

More closely than anything else, she watched her brother's face; for Donald was her hero and she was jealous of any sign in him of flinching under pain. It was he who was always telling her stories of the brave deeds of old; having so receptive a listener, he did not fail to paint his warriors as encountering three-headed giants, or fire-breathing dragons, with indifference, and leaping into the chasm of the forum, or being thrust into the spiked barrel with smiling composure. So she naturally demanded, in her loyal little heart, that he should come up to the mark in fortitude as well as the best of them. On the whole, she was satisfied with him, though she debated somewhat painfully within herself whether Mutius Scævola said "Whew!" when he laid his hand on the burning altar, as Donald did when his stocking was drawn off. Little Faith, only five years old, looked at his blanched cheeks with a kind of silent awe; but Theodora did not feel quite at peace about them till she found an opportunity to ask her mother privately:

"Do soldiers and men that get hurt, always look so white as Donald did?"

"Almost always; pain and loss of blood make almost any one look pale."

"It wasn't because he was frightened, *was* it?" she asked confidently, yet wishing to be made more confident.

"No, I think not; he bore it like a man. It would have been no shame to him if he had been frightened, for it was an ugly cut."

The little sister was at rest; Donald was all right. But now came in from school, the older brother and sister

—Robert and Miriam—and presently the father returning from the post-office. Theodora was filled with a delightful sense of consequence as sole witness of the accident.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Cameron, with Miriam's help, made ready the tea-table. Take a look at the family as they gather around it:

There behind the tea-tray, with its simple stone china furnishing, sits the mother. You would know she was the mother, by the thoughtful kindness in her blue eyes, by the lines in her fair forehead and about her restful mouth—lines written by the loving care and patient pain, the pleadings and the prayers, her six children have cost her. Her very hands look like mother hands; as if they had washed and dressed little babies, made bread and pies for hungry children, sewed and mended their numberless garments.

Tristram Shandy says of Uncle Toby: "There was something in his look and voice and manner superadded, which eternally beckoned to the unfortunate to come and take shelter under him." It must have been something akin to that about this woman which so often made the motherless feel as if it would be a cure for heart-ache to lay one's head on her kind bosom and be folded in her warm arms. Nor was it love and pity only, that she had to give. She had sound sense and rich experience, and she took counsel so often of Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, that she was apt to see the truth of things.

You see her very simply dressed. The soft, dark hair, which the years have just begun to streak with grey, is indulged a little in its propensity to curl, "just to please the children;" but she has too many to care for to spend much time in beautifying herself. Yet as those

children shall look back through the long years hereafter, they will see no image so sacredly beautiful as hers.

Opposite sits the father. His broad forehead, under masses of iron-grey hair, marked eyebrows, piercing black eyes, the decided line of the mouth and curve of the chin, with the firmly-knit frame, show him what he is:—resolute, fearless, self-reliant, grave, clear in judgment, prompt in action. But you do not know him, till you have seen the drollery creep into those eyes, while the sober mouth finishes an argument with a telling stroke of shrewd Scotch humor, nor till you have heard that manly voice, tremulous with pity and tenderness, while it speaks strong consolation to the suffering.

His is a direct, positive mind, which could not long be contented in the twilight, could not pitch its tent where two ways meet and dwell there, because uncertain which to take. Definite opinions, decided beliefs, are a necessity of his nature; nor is it less a necessity, those opinions and beliefs being formed, to defend and enforce them. So it is not strange that he is a preacher; but he is more than a preacher—he is a minister to his people. The faith delivered to him by fathers who fought for it on Pentland Hills, or starved for it in beleaguered Derry, is not his by inheritance alone. By the reasonings, the wrestlings, the penitence and consecration of early manhood, it was wrought into his soul, to be a living power forever.

It was now some eighteen years since this man and this woman had brought to the founding of a home—not much of worldly substance, but—a competence of good sense, good temper, working power, love for each other, and loyalty toward God.

Into this home, with its atmosphere of love and truth,

had come, by this time, six children, who may be trusted to make themselves known in due time:—Robert and Miriam, Donald and Theodora, Faith and baby Jessie, just now studying the art and mystery of walking.

"It was not in vain that you took Donald to the debate last evening," remarked Mrs. Cameron to her husband, as they sat at the tea-table.

"Now, mother, please don't!" begged Donald; but she went on, throwing him a smile.

"He has been haranguing the wood-pile and Theodora on the fugitive slave question, in the most oratorical style."

"Now, mother, don't you think you are a little too bad?" exclaimed Donald. He did not mind her overhearing him, but he was afraid of appearing ridiculous to his father.

"Demosthenes used to practice on the waves for an audience—why shouldn't you on the wood-pile?" asked the father, who secretly cherished high hopes of the boy, and liked to stir his ambition.

The young orator shrugged his shoulders and elevated his eyebrows at the comparison. But in five minutes the children about the table were discussing, with flashing eyes and eager voices, the question which had roused the village Lyceum the evening before. It was the time when the whole country was aflame with excitement over the Fugitive Slave Bill, and that fire which kindles an ardent love of justice and liberty in young hearts was warm in many households. The young Camerons were used to hearing the subjects which interested their father and mother thoroughly discussed, and had their opinions early rooted and grounded.

It was the invariable habit at the Camerons' to "have

prayers" directly after breakfast. It was no irksome service. Parts of the Bible were chosen which the children could best understand, and they all read in turn, down to little Faith, who delivered the long words with a sense of triumph quite vain-glorious. Then came the singing, which they all enjoyed, and the father's prayer, short, simple, varied, and earnest.

The whole history of the home was inscribed upon the family altar. There solemn and joyful thanks had been rendered for every life added to the flock, and there grief, waywardness, and sickness had been brought for healing. There every important plan or perplexity had been laid, that it might catch the light of heaven; and there every journey was recorded, for no one went away without a benediction sought, or returned without thanksgiving. In fact, it was from this altar that the oldest boy took a new departure for his life's journey, the morning after Donald's little accident.

It happened in this way: the chapter read at prayers was the seventeenth of Proverbs, and the verse fell to Robert, "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?"

As he read it, he looked up with an arch smile, saying:

"Don't you think that applies to me, father?"

"Don't call yourself a fool, my son," was answered, with a shade of disgust. A smile ran around the circle, for it was well understood that it was the father's strong desire to send Robert through college, and the boy's desire, equally strong, not to go.

As the family were dispersing, after worship, Mr. Cameron called Robert back. There was a look of sadness and disappointment in his face; the boy was sorry to see it, but he felt that the happiness of his life was at

stake; so he came back and sat down, resolved to say all that was in his heart. The father began:

"I have no wish to force you to go to college, my son, if you have no heart for it; but it has always been my plan that you should be educated. I hoped you might be inclined to become a minister."

"I know it, father, and I would try—I have tried—to please you, but I feel sure I shall never amount to anything, if I go on."

"Boys can hardly tell what they will want when they are men."

"But I am sixteen now, sir, and it seems as if something would have to be decided soon. If you say so, of course I will plod along and do the best I can; but if you were willing to let me give it up, I should be gladder than you can imagine. This Greek and Latin fairly make me sick," he burst out, with a vehemence unusual for him, his cheeks flushed and his blue eyes pleading. "You have no idea how I dread the hours I spend on them. I would rather dig ditches or lay stone walls."

The father turned his head with something like a groan. "When I was of your age," he said, "I used to snatch every moment I could—in the corner of the hayfield while the men were eating their lunch, on top of the load, holding the plough—to study this same Latin and Greek."

"There it is, father. You loved it; you wanted it, and you worked for it with a will. I wish I had that feeling, but I have not one spark of it. It is rowing up stream for me—every stroke of it."

There was a pause before the father, with eyes looking into the distance and a voice of repressed feeling, spoke again:

"I have been glad to think you would have an easier time than I had in getting an education. Though I have not much means, it is something to have a father anxious to help you all he can, with a good library for you to use."

Many a man looks back with a kind of affectionate pity on his young self struggling through thwarting circumstances, and vows to make him amends in the person of his son; but time reveals, to the father's chagrin, that this son is not his young self over again, but another, with quite different tastes and ambitions. So Life manages to tell the old story over again.

The fidelity to his own soul's vocation which had strengthened John Cameron to break away from his father's farm to follow a scholar's labors and rewards was nothing different from that which confronted him now in his Robert, sorrowfully but resolutely protesting against his wishes, and planning new attempts and ventures for himself.

For the present, however, Robert looked gloomily out of the window, feeling humiliated. He knew that his father was bitterly disappointed in him, yet self-respect rose up within him and spoke out:

"I don't think it is that I am lazy, father. I am willing to work, and work hard; only, not with books. Set me doing almost anything else, and I won't disappoint you."

"What should you prefer to do, if you left study?"

"I should *like*, better than anything, to be a farmer. I never enjoyed anything better than helping Uncle David, haying-time; but then, I should be perfectly willing to go into a store or a machine-shop, or anything else where I can bestir myself and be around among people, and *do* something."

"Very well; we will think it over and try to do what is right. You wish to be an intelligent citizen, whatever your business is?"

"Yes, father; but I don't need Latin and Greek to be an intelligent citizen, do I? Mayn't I drop them, right away?"

Mr. Cameron rubbed his hand across the lower part of his face with a slightly impatient gesture. "You may finish this term. You can learn self-mastery by it, if nothing else. You may go now and take care of the horse. I ought to be off for Foxbridge in about an hour."

Robert went into the stable, whistling for lightness of heart. He knew that his father was apt to say less than he meant, rather than more, and he considered his case as good as won. Along with boundless faith in his kindness, the young Camerons felt for their father that awe which a dignified, decided character, expressed in every feature, is apt to inspire; and they found it anything but easy to oppose his well-known wishes. So it was that Robert felt much relieved that he had expressed his mind so fully, not without effect.

II.

THE FAMILY DISGRACED.

MR. CAMERON, like ministers generally, liked a good horse. More than that, he knew how to choose and manage one, and his two boys imitated him in being fine riders and drivers. It was a labor of love for Robert to groom black Hannibal, and, this morning, he favored the handsome creature with some extra patting, and confided to him: "I have done it, old fellow!"

As he was currying his glossy coat, he heard a rustling in the hay-loft, and called: "Who is there?"

A greater rustling, then a bound, and down peered Miriam's fair face, her thick auburn hair well sprinkled with hay-seed. She came down the rough stairs, her apron gathered up in her left hand full of eggs.

"I have found a new nest the further side of the hay-mow," she said. "There was the least little hole in the hay, and I ran my arm in till I came to such a warm, smooth, hard handful! See, there are seven of them. I should think those hens would be tired of trying to hide their nests from me."

"Hens have not much sense," observed Robert. "They take so much pains to hide their nests, and then cackle for the whole neighborhood to come to find them."

"Just like some people who make a great parade of having a secret to keep," remarked the sister. She came up and stroked Hannibal's face as she asked, "What sort of a talk did you have with father?"

"Oh, pretty good. He said he would think it over, and that's next thing to saying he will let me off."

"I should think you would try, for father's sake," said Miriam, her eyes resting absently on a lock of hay which she held, while the horse gradually gathered it in with his great lips.

Miriam's ruling passion was love for her father. That fond, tender pride on the one side, and half adoration on the other, which so often marks the affection of a father and his oldest daughter, was very strong between them. To please him was her first thought; to have him troubled or thwarted was pain to her. Robert was not surprised to hear her say, "I don't see how you can *help* doing what he wants you to."

"Why, Miriam, I don't want to cross his wishes; you know I don't; but I have my own life to live, and I know I shall make a failure of it as sure as I go into this kind of thing. I don't think father would much enjoy seeing me a fourth-rate minister, always hanging around in want of a place."

"Why, you wouldn't be!" said Miriam, offended at the idea that her father's eldest son could be a failure.

"What's the reason? I abominate writing; I have no gift for speaking. I like to study natural philosophy well enough, or anything like that, that you can *do* something with; but languages, and such things, are nothing but a drug to me. Think of my reeling two sermons a week out of my brain as long as I live!" A shake of the head and a slap on Hannibal's shining thigh conveyed what words failed to express.

"But father wanted you to do so much good," suggested Miriam.

"Of course he does," answered Robert, taking down

the harness from the wall and throwing it over the horse, which gave a nervous shiver, and then stood still. "And so I want to; but a poor minister isn't so useful as a good farmer, I believe. I tell you what, Miriam—whoa, Han! Open your teeth!—it seems to me as if God had a good many kinds of work to be done in the world, and cut men out to fit them. I don't pretend to know what He meant me for—nothing very particular, as I know of; but one thing I'm certain of—it's not a minister! You and Donald will have to save the credit of the family, as far as books go. Stand away, now, please. I'm going to back him into the buggy."

Miriam ran and held up one of the thills with her free hand, while Hannibal stepped back between them. Then she walked slowly into the house, pondering on Robert's last words about Donald and herself. She had a fine mind, and had already became an ambitious scholar for her father's sake. He was always chary of praise, but the thought of his "Well done, my daughter," was enough to carry her through the hard study of a whole term at school. As she walked into the pantry and laid the eggs, one by one, from her apron into their basket, she was resolving, deep in her young heart, that she would be a scholar, whether Robert was or not; whatever she could do to soothe her father's disappointment, should be done. Still beneath that resolution stirred the despairing thought, what could she do? she was only a girl!

But now she heard Hannibal trampling out of the stable, and ran into the sitting-room to see her father off.

He kissed the girls and their mother, said good-bye to the boys, with a parting charge about the cow and the garden, and then looked back, and bowed with an affectionate smile that took them all in as he drove away.

"Where's papa going?" asked Faith, as they watched the buggy fast disappearing down the street.

"To the Association," answered the four older children together.

"What's 'Sociation?" she asked, not much enlightened.

"Oh, the ministers get together and discuss and crack jokes, and tell stories, and have a big dinner," explained Donald, somewhat irreverently.

At least so he understood the little admonitory pat on the shoulder his mother gave him as she turned away from the door with Jessie in her arms, and asked:

"Well, what is it anyway, mother, if it isn't that?"

"They write sermons, and essays, and explanations of passages in the Bible, and read to each other for criticism, and study a chapter in Hebrew or Greek together, and discuss some important question given out beforehand."

"But they do have the jokes, and stories, and dinner, too, mother; for I remember what a jolly time we had when they were here," said Robert; and upon that, the children fell to recalling the funny stories, and the divers characteristics of different ministers, their horses and equipages.

"Don't you remember what a poky old red horse Dr. White had?" asked Robert of Donald; "I was afraid I should pull his head off, when I led him out to water, it stretched his neck and made his eyes stick out so."

"Oh, it was his old chaise that was painted yellow and went squeakity-squeak," exclaimed Theodora; "Faith and I rode in it ever so much, out in the barn. We liked it best because we could hear ourselves go."

These two little girls seldom failed to take an imaginary journey in any visitor's vehicle that happened to stand

in the yard or carriage-house, and marvelous were the adventures that befell them in their travels.

"How the ministers did laugh at him about that toad!" exclaimed Donald.

"Why, what was it about the toad?" asked Theodora eagerly.

"You see he is one of your learned men who has every kind of sense but common sense," said Robert, who cherished some disgust for that style of intellect. "It was a melting day they came, and as he was jogging along across that sandy plain this side of Dustville, he noticed a large toad by the roadside. He had time to gaze at it about half an hour, while that old nag of his was getting by it, and he took it into his head that the poor toad looked rather faint, sweltering in the hot sun. So what did the benevolent old gentleman do, but get out of his 'one-hoss shay,' and go to its relief! He looked all around, but there wasn't a rock or a tree anywhere near; just one patch of shade in the middle of the road was all he could see. So he took up the panting animile and set it down there—got in and rode off, pleased to think how he had ameliorated its condition, when you see it was nothing but the shadow of his own chaise he had put it in!"

The children all laughed, but Miriam said:

"I don't believe any grown man could do such a silly thing, and father says Dr. White is one of the most learned men in the State."

"Learned? Of course he is; he's so learned he can't see anything short of a thousand years off. It was a fact, for Mr. Brown saw it, and overtook him just after. He said Dr. White was looking uncommonly mild and complacent, and said it was a satisfaction to relieve the sufferings of a fellow-creature, however humble."

"I am sure that was nice of him," remarked Miriam; but Robert only laughed the more. He evidently thought benevolence and bearing made a sorry figure out of the company of common sense.

"Wasn't Mr. Brown's horse a beauty!" exclaimed Donald! "He let me take a ride on him, and I tell you the way we went was a caution to the lame or the lazy."

"Don't you remember good old Mr. Gray was here?" said Miriam. "I do love to have him come; he beams on us and calls us all 'Dear,' and talks such broad Scotch!"

"Yes," said Donald, "I generally hate having men lay their hands on my head, as if I was a baby; but when he lays his big hand on my head and says, 'I hope ye 'll be a gret an gude mon, me lad,' I feel as if I should."

"After all, there 's nobody like Uncle Thayer," said Theodora. But at this moment, Mrs. Cameron, who had gone at once to the kitchen on leaving the door, came back, saying: "Come, girls, it is almost school-time, and I want you to be sure and get the beds made before you go; and Faith must amuse the baby while I am cooking. Boys, you better see that the new hen-house is done before it is time to make the garden."

Mrs. Cameron's only helpers in carrying on the work of the family, were this troop of fun-loving children, and it demanded much exercise of her vigorous mind to lay the plan of each day's campaign, marshal her frolicsome forces, inspire them to action, and hold them to their duty. Nor were they wasted talents; the motives to energy and fidelity, which had to be urged upon her children every day, in order to get the necessary work of the house done, formed no small part of their education.

It was towards evening, the next day, that the father

returned. He always came home from these meetings of the Association quite refreshed in spirit.

"Now, father, tell us all about it, please," said Donald, as the two boys came in after seeing Hannibal in his stall, with his supper before him.

"Let us go where your mother is, then," answered Mr. Cameron, who had just finished reading the letters awaiting him.

The family were apt to gather wherever the mother happened to be. This time they found her in the kitchen pouring into a basin some maple syrup, which looked like liquid amber. Miriam was preparing to toast the bread for supper, and Theodora, who had just finished laying the table, followed in her father's train. He picked up little Jessie from the floor, gave her a toss towards the ceiling which made the pink flush red in her cheeks, and then sat down, with her on his knee, to tell his story.

The young Camerons never expected toys or confectionery when their father came home, but the great pleasure they always looked forward to was hearing him "tell all about it." He had such a graphic style of describing the places and people he had seen, and the little incidents that had occurred, that to listen to him was almost better than going, and served to enlarge the horizon of their small experience.

As he finished his animated story, he remarked:

"I spoke with Brother Thayer about your case, Robert,"—the brother aforesaid was a friend so intimate that the children all called him "Uncle"—"and he thinks with me that you are too young to leave school yet, whatever you are to do in future; but he promised to be on the look-out for you, and to write about it to his brother-in-law, Walton, who is an excellent business

man, the other side the Mountain, and would be likely to know of chances."

"Thank you, father." Robert said it quite demurely, out of respect to his father's feelings; but he immediately followed Miriam into the pantry, and relieved his delight by spinning her around three or four times, then setting her down on the meal-chest, with the joyful exclamation:

"The college business is settled, you see."

"Supper is ready!" called the mother, as she took the tea from the stove; "but where can Faith be?"

"Hasn't she come from school?"

"No," answered the mother, with a troubled look. "The teacher had her stay after school one night, for whispering, but she surely would not keep her till this time; it is six o'clock."

"I thought I saw her coming half an hour ago," said Theodora.

"Run and see if you cannot find her; maybe she has gone down to the spring for some willow 'pussies.'"

While Theodora went to search for the truant, the rest sat down to the table. Mrs. Cameron hesitated to do so, for she was worried about the little absentee; but Donald suggested that his father must be hungry, having himself a decided preference for hot toast and maple-honey.

Theodora had not far to seek. She found her sister sitting in that very shed door where we first saw herself. In fact, that threshold was a favorite seat with all the children, and well it might be.

From it steps led down to a steep hillside, overgrown with raspberry and mulberry bushes, overshadowed here and there by a tall oak or butternut tree. At the foot of this hill, which was of itself a wilderness of delights and

surprises for a small child, was a never-failing spring of cold, sweet water. The mossy old hogshead into which it welled, reflected a round bit of sky fringed with nodding celandine and graceful sprays of blackberry vine, and often within this sweet setting the bright faces of children. A little brook, flowing lazily from the spring, lay like a moat along the base of the hill, dividing it from the level meadows, which stretched away, a wonder of peaceful beauty through all the summer time. Now, in their place, lay a glassy lake, for the Connecticut was at the height of its annual freshet. Beyond rose the many-formed New Hampshire hills, just tinged with those faint clouds of color that softly foreshadow the coming verdure of the opening year; still beyond them rose the regal heights of distant mountains, just now answering back the good-night blessing of the sinking sun. The western hill which rose, like a rampart, all along behind the village, hid him early from the valley and the river, while his light still lingered in glory about those noble summits.

But the small figure in the doorway seemed to be taking little heed of the beautiful scene before her. Her Shaker bonnet was tipped down over her face in a strangely dejected manner; there was something pathetic in the droop of its buff cape over the back of her head and chubby neck.

"So here you are!" cried Theodora, springing towards her. "We did not know what had become of you."

But little Faith did not look up, and the Shaker cape quivered with a sob.

"Why, Chickie, what is the matter?" exclaimed Theodora, stooping to take off the bonnet and look in her face.

Suddenly brought out of her retirement in this way, the child hid her eyes in the sleeve of her high-necked apron, which had a very round little brown fist coming out at the end of it, and began to weep in earnest.

Theodora sat down beside the mournful wee bit wifie, and, putting her arm around her, stroked her round little head.

"What *is* the *matter?*" she asked.

"I 've—I 've—'sgraced the family," sobbed the morsel of misery.

Her sister managed not to laugh, and asked, patting her cheek:

"Why, what have you done?"

Faith shook with an inward tempest, and burst forth with a desperate *crescendo.*

"I've been wh—wh—whipped!"

"Why, you poor, dear little thing, what did they whip you for?"

"She said she should ferule us if we missed a word in spelling, 'cause we didn't get it well last time; so I studied jest as tight as I could, and I got it, all but two or three words that were over the leaf, I didn't see. And then one of those very words went and came to me and I didn't do it right."

In the earnestness of telling her sad tale, Faith looked up in her sister's eyes, her plump little face quite red and tear-stained.

"What was the word?" asked Theodora, with the curiosity of superior knowledge.

"It was psalm; and I thought s-a-r-m would be a good way to spell it—I didn't know—and then she feruled me because I didn't put a *p* and an *l* to it. I don't see what it wants of a *p* and an *l*," said Faith, her lower lip press-

ing up again in grief and indignation; "I don't b'lieve she'd *ought* to whip me! And there never was any of us whipped to school before, and I can't never go into the house again. I 've 'sgraced the fam'ly."

Here she hid her face on her sister's shoulder and cried aloud.

Theodora put both arms around her, and said:

"Don't cry; you tried to do as well as you could; father and mother won't blame you. It isn't a bit as if you had been a naughty girl, you know."

"They won't be glad to see me, I'm 'fraid," whispered Faith.

"Oh, yes, they will! Father has come home and we have hot maple-honey for supper, and mother is worried because you don't come."

Certainly the mention of maple-honey did create a diversion in the feelings of the mourner. There was a sensible abatement of her agitation.

"I will run in first and tell them about it, if you want me to," said Theodora.

Faith seemed to acquiesce, for she raised her head, but she shook it sadly, and remarked:

"P'raps they'll be ashamed to ever have me come in any more—the firs' child that ever got whipped to school!"

Theodora darted into the house, and in two or three minutes Faith heard her mother calling:

"Come in, my little girl, come in and eat your supper."

She looked up with a humble, apologetic air, but her mother was coming to meet her, smiling kindly, and she took her small hand in hers, which always felt so warm and firm, caressing her cheek with the other hand, as she led her in.

Her father pushed back from the table and held out his arms to her. He took her on his knee and kissed her little downcast face two or three times, gave her one close hug, and set her down, saying:

"Now eat your supper, my dear."

They came of a race not given to kissing and embracing, however deep their feelings might be, so that even little Faith felt, when her father gave her that greeting, instead of one kiss, that he did not blame her for disgracing the family. Robert lifted her into her high-chair, and everyone seemed anxious to help her to something.

The little maid had some doubts whether it was customary for persons in deep affliction to eat as much as usual, but the maple-honey was irresistible; so she suffered herself to be comforted.

Nothing was said about her misfortune until she was put to bed at twilight. Then her mother took her in her lap, while she unbuttoned her frock, and said:

"Now, my little girl, tell me all about the trouble at school."

When she had finished, her mother asked:

"Are you sure that is all? that you did not play nor behave badly?"

"I was jest as good as pie," said Faith, positively. "Only I didn't see those words over the leaf."

"Why didn't you tell the teacher so?"

"I tried to, but she said she wouldn't have no words 'bout it. And she took my fingers jes' so," said Faith, bending them back with her other hand so as to bring her rosy cushion of a palm in bold relief, "and she hit it pretty hard, five or twenty times, I guess, but I held on jest as hard as I could, and I didn't cry, only one little speck when she first begun. That was right, wasn't it?"

Faith's mother smiled on her, but she only said:

"I think Miss Dodge didn't quite understand about it. She must have thought you were careless and didn't try to learn; but if you are a good little girl and do just as well as you can, I don't think you will be feruled again. There, dear, put your head through," holding up the night-dress in a circle.

As the little brown head emerged from the white folds, the mother met it with a kiss; then they knelt down, and after the child had said her nightly prayers, her mother asked that God would bless her at school as well as at home, and bless her teacher, too, and show her how to take care of all the little girls and boys in her charge.

Neither parent said, in so many words, that Faith was innocent and her teacher was guilty; they were anxious to cherish respect for all lawful authority, still she felt in her honest little heart that they did her justice in their thoughts; especially the next morning at prayers, when her father called her to place her small chair beside him, and went out of the usual course to read from one of Peter's Epistles, laying his hand on her head when the words were read: "What glory is it if, when you are buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently? but if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

Yet the fact remained, like a sting in her memory, that she alone of all the family had been whipped at school, and she felt that she had received a wrong at the hands of her teacher. Not that corporal punishment was an entirely new thing to the child; she was a stubborn little creature who had required severer discipline than any of her brothers and sisters, and of them all, Miriam

was the only one who had never been forcibly taught that the way of transgressors is hard. But neither father nor mother ever punished them except for something really wrong, nor then, without careful investigation of the facts.

In a day or two, Faith confided to Theodora that she didn't b'lieve but what the teacher was 'most sorry she feruled her so that she couldn't never say—not if she lived to be a hundred years old—that she wasn't ever whipped to school.

When Theodora shared this confidence with her father and mother, they exchanged smiles, and as soon as she had left the room, Mr. Cameron remarked:

"So your call was not lost on Miss Dodge?"

"No; I thought she would do better, not only for Faith, but the rest," answered his wife. "She has no experience in the care of children, but a great idea of making them mind, and she doesn't seem to have realized that justice is the first element in good government."

"She will gain in tact and discrimination. It is worth something to find a teacher in these public schools resolved on order and obedience."

"That's true enough. I don't know what is to become of the country, if children are to grow up governed neither at home nor at school."

"Did she take your suggestions pleasantly?"

"Very; there seemed to be a touch of offence about her at first; but before I came away, she said she was really thankful to me for coming."

And Miss Dodge *was* thankful to the woman who, instead of scolding about her mistaken management, had come so frankly and gently to her. She felt that this treasure of motherly wisdom was a new resource in the bewildering perplexity of her duties.

III.

THE HEAD OF THE SPRING.

AUTUMN had come. If you have ever lived in the hill-country of New England, you know how much that means. You know grey, craggy fortresses which rise against the sky, encircled by solemn guards of spruce and hemlock, in their unchanging green, while below, over all the broad hill-side,

> "Ten thousand banners rise into the air,
> With orient colors waving."

You have seen hosts of maples in scarlet and gold, with silver-stemmed birches, rank above rank, flash out the triumph of the year, while at their feet, the clearness of a mountain river mingled the flaming glories of the woods with the brooding blue and floating clouds of heaven.

Those were delicious days to the young Camerons. That grave question which vexes the wise heads of Christendom: How can our young people be amused? never seemed to trouble them. Nature looked out for that. They found exhaustless joys in—

> "Knowledge never learned of schools,
> Of the wild bee's morning chase,
> Of the wild flower's time and place,

Flight of fowl and habitude
Of the tenants of the wood:
How the tortoise bears his shell,
How the woodchuck digs his cell,
And the ground-mole sinks his well;
How the robin feeds her young,
How the oreole's nest is hung;
Where the whitest lilies blow,
Where the freshest berries grow,
Where the ground-nut trails its vine,
Where the wood-grape's clusters shine;
Of the black wasp's cunning way,
Mason of his walls of clay,
And the architectural plans
Of grey hornet artisans!"

A favorite playmate of theirs was a brook which came dashing out of the woods which skirted the village on the north, and, after a few frolicsome plunges, took its way quietly across the meadows, as if training itself to the dignity of the river it was soon to join.

Robert's seventeenth birthday fell on Saturday, and he chose to celebrate it by a nutting expedition with Donald, Miriam, and Theodora; Faith, to her chagrin, being pronounced too young to join them. He had the feeling that he should soon be too much of a man to go nutting, and would like to enjoy the pleasure once more.

Theodora was full of delight, for the plan was to reach the beech-grove by following up the brook nearly two miles—just what she had long desired to do. She knew every mossy rock it rippled past in its lower course, but she always wanted to see where her old friend came from. A touch of adventure, which gave the keenest zest to pleasure for her, was just so much abatement of it for Miriam, who was not only a little timid, but had a

dainty dislike for being soiled or torn. Donald was in overflowing spirits. Besides the other charms of the excursion, there was the manly sense of superiority in taking the girls over ground new to them, though quite familiar to him as well as Robert.

Their mother put them up a basket of lunch, taking care to have a good supply of apple-turnovers, which were Robert's special delight. Her children could not have valuable presents on their birthdays, except as she managed that some necessary new article of dress should make its timely appearance just then; but some little pleasure was almost always devised to mark the occasion, remembered, perhaps, more delightfully than costly gifts would have been.

Theodora was wild with delight as she came upon mimic cascades, with ferns and asters forever trembling in their edges, or pools where the brook was pausing for a moment to bethink itself of some new prank, while the sunshine flickered through the shade, down to its many-colored pebbles; then it ran on, laughing, to some bolder leap or some audacious dash at the rocks which disputed its passage. She kept near Donald, who led the way, and nothing pleased them better than to find their path cut off by the steep bank, so that it was necessary to cross the brook.

Then came the delicious thrill of springing across! The birches nodded their graceful heads at one another, as if they liked to see the little girl, poised on a rock in the middle of the stream, with the frolicsome water eddying all around her, her hair shaken back, her cheeks glowing, and her eyes bright with daring as they measured the leap to the shore; then what shouts of triumph rang through the forest as she landed beside her

brother, and what merry taunts they flung back as they saw Robert throwing a log across for a bridge, because Miriam was afraid to venture!

When there was no room for a foothold on either edge of the brook, they had to make a detour through the woods. But this, too, had its pleasures, for sprigs of trailing evergreens peered through the thick bed of pine needles, and they liked to rip up the long vines with their tufts of feathery green. Then there were such exquisite cushions of moss as one never finds except when Nature is left quite alone to cover her ruins with a regretful beauty.

"We are almost through," said Robert at last.

"Oh, are we?" exclaimed Theodora; "I wish we could get lost in the woods!"

"You would want to be found about supper-time," remarked the practical Robert.

But her mind was full of wonder as to what she should see when they were "through." She had always longed to know what was behind the top of that high hill which the forest covered. If she could see over these, she should see what the world was like!

Donald had dashed up the last climb, and was standing on a huge boulder with a background of sky. As he waved his hat and shouted to them, with his hair flowing in the breeze, Theodora could think of nothing but the picture of Balboa catching the first glimpse of the Pacific. It seemed as if an ocean would break upon her sight if she could stand beside him. She scrambled up the bank and the rock, Donald lending her a hand.

A pasture, with cattle browsing, a little weather-stained farm-house and farm, a higher hill, quite brown and bare, with a few mountain-tops peeping over its shoulders—that was all.

Was that all the world was like? Just a little home, with a higher hill to climb, and mountains yet beyond? But then the sky over all was very beautiful, with its fathomless blue and its slowly-sailing clouds.

"It's my opinion there couldn't be a better time for lunch," remarked Robert.

"It's my opinion there might be a better place," said Miriam; "I expect the next sight I see will be myself going head foremost off this rock into the brook."

"Come around, then, to the beeches," said Robert, "it's only a few steps. Then we'll find our dessert on the ground."

"You were always wanting to know where the brook came from," said Donald to Theodora; "there is the head of it, up where that cow is drinking."

She looked across the field and saw a little stream trickling through a hollowed log, the damp, black earth all around it trodden by the hoofs of cattle; out of this ran a narrow thread of water, without a shrub to grace its border, slinking across the pasture to hide itself in the woods.

The poor child could say nothing. The brook always looked as if it came out of the skies.

"I am just hungry enough," said Robert, as he threw himself down and opened the lunch-basket.

"I never saw the time you were not just hungry enough for apple-turnovers," observed Donald.

"Base insinuation! You know when you are rampant, raving, omnivorous hungry, you can't stop to enjoy eating; and if you are not hungry at all, you don't appreciate."

"And I am just tired enough to enjoy sitting down," said Miriam, trying to settle herself among the roots of a

tree. "Isn't it odd, roots are never made exactly right for a seat? They look as inviting as can be, and then they just slip you off. There is always such a dreadful downwardness to them."

"Inconsiderate of trees. Say, Donald, drag up that piece of board, will you? There, lay it across that stone and that root. How's that?"

"Oh! that makes a capital seat," said Miriam, leaning her back against a tree with great content. "You have a knack, like father, of making things comfortable, haven't you, Robert?"

"Ain't you mistaken in the person?" inquired Donald.

"No; you brought it, but he thought of it. Here, Theodora, there's plenty of room for you, too."

But Theodora liked better to curl down on a heap of crisp leaves beside a mossy log, so Donald took the other seat on the "dais."

A horse in the neighboring pasture lifted his head, and looked over the fence at them with some curiosity.

"I believe he is glad to see us," said Theodora.

"Of course he is," answered Donald. "Horses like people, and I have no doubt they get lonesome out in the pasture."

"There, ladies and gentlemen, help yourselves," said Robert, passing around the bread and butter and dried beef on the cover of the basket—

"'On turkey, fowl and fishes,
They sumptuously do dine,
In gold and silver dishes
Their costly viands shine.'"

"Where did you pick up that bit of doggerel?" asked Donald.

"Don't you know, sonny? That is one stanza from a popular ballad composed in England about Revolutionary times, concerning your illustrious forefathers, to show how luxuriously they lived over here, and how well they could afford to pay their taxes."

"A drink of water would be the greatest luxury I can think of," said Miriam.

"I was just thinking that same thing. Donald, suppose you take this tin dipper and make a trip to the spring."

"Suppose *you* do," suggested Donald.

"It is proper small boys should do these little things. When a man gets to be my age," said Robert, stroking his upper lip, which was shaded with the least possible promise of its future harvest, "it is suitable he should be waited on, more or less."

"I thought you seemed to be getting a little infirm, as we came up the brook," replied Donald, rising good-naturedly to take the dipper.

"See!" exclaimed Theodora, presently; "he has made friends with that horse."

He was walking along with one arm over the horse's neck, stroking his face.

"Oh, see! see!" she cried again.

He had guided the creature up to a stump, and leaped upon his back.

The horse seemed surprised at first, and trotted briskly towards the bars, while his young rider waved the tin cup in the sun, and looked back, laughing. After a few turns around the field, which they both seemed to enjoy, Donald took leave of him at the spring.

As he came, bringing the water, Robert called out:

"Maybe Mr. Hawks didn't turn out his horse to be ridden by every boy that comes along."

"I am not every boy that comes along," said Donald, handing the dipper to Miriam. "I would just as lief have him see me as not, else I wouldn't have done it."

Donald did not look like "every boy that comes along." It was not so much his thick, soft hair, with just wave enough in it to assert its freedom, nor his large, laughing brown eyes, nor his rich color; it was something which expressed itself in the toss of the hair, the flushing of the color, the changing light of the eyes. He had all that frank, joyous fullness of life, that is apt to throw such a refreshing atmosphere about a boy of thirteen or fourteen, and much beside.

"Mr. Hawks is a friend of mine. He told me there wa'n't no better land outdoors than this farm of his, and if I'd come up and spend the Summer with him he'd learn me 'nough sight more than I'd git down to the 'cademy, and make me tough as a knot."

"That's a fine animal," said Robert, taking scientific aim with a pebble at a sleek, brindled ox, grazing near the fence. The ox shook off the pebble with a twitch of his hide, taking it for some big fly, and Robert went on: "If I had a meadow farm, with a yoke or two of creatures like that to till it, I'd snap my fingers at the best business chance you could show me."

"Now, I should think you would rather go into a store," said Miriam; "it is so much cleaner work."

"Cleaner!" exclaimed Robert, with contempt; "girls think of nothing but looking just so prim and nice. Earth is clean enough. It is a great deal cleaner and fresher and sweeter, working out in the open field, than it is stived up in a country store."

"What a clean, fresh, sweet-looking object that is, for instance," said Miriam, with a quiet smile, nodding

towards Mr. Hawks, who was just throwing down a pair of bars at a little distance, while his oxen waited with a cart-lord of manure. However jocund he might drive his team afield, he certainly was dirty and ragged as a beggar. "Would you like to see yourself looking like that?"

"I don't care how I look. Besides, there is no need of his making a scarecrow of himself if he hadn't a taste for it."

Robert does not know his own heart if he thinks he doesn't care how he looks; else, why has he such a horror of wearing anything that could by the remotest chance be called "dandified"? Why did he beg to go on wearing that grey tweed, though his growing arms were pushing his wrists quite out of the sleeves, rather than have his father's broadcloth made over for him? Doesn't his mother know, to her cost, that though he is reckless of neck-ties, he is fastidious as to shirts and hose? Moreover, with all his partiality for old clothes, there is a free-and-easy neatness about him that goes well with his honest blue eyes, Saxon complexion, and closely-clipped hair.

"Why don't you go onto a farm, if you like it so much?" asked Theodora.

"Easier said than done," he answered. "A man can't make anything, farming here in New England, unless he has an inheritance to start with. There is no way to do it but to go far; and I have disappointed father so much already, I don't like to urge that. If Mr. Walton gives me the chance he wrote about, I suppose I shall take it, and be thankful."

"If you drive as sharp bargains as you used to, when we had the store in the barn and traded for pins, you will make a successful merchant," remarked Donald.

"Oh, I rather think I should make it go. Like to try it, anyhow."

And he did try it, the following Spring.

Late in the afternoon, the merry party started for home.

"Now, I might cut across to the pasture, and drive the cow home," said Donald, when they were half-way down the brook.

"Oh, let me go with you!" said Theodora, who was always eager to go wherever Donald went.

"Come on, then." He liked it about as well as she did.

"Can't we meet at the edge of the woods?" asked Miriam.

"Yes, where you come into the road. We will go home in a solid phalanx."

"We will take your evergreen for you, then," said Robert, relieving them of the long vines which were heaped on shoulders and arms. "There—good luck to you! Don't tell the cow any lies!"

"Oh, hush!" exclaimed Donald, rather teased. Theodora seized him by the jacket and kept him waiting while she could ask:

"What is it about telling the cow lies?"

"Why, don't you know? When Donald was a little shaver, he came into the house, one day, crying because he had 'told the cow a lie.' He stood by the bars and shook the peck measure to her. She thought he had some potatoes, and came running post haste, and then he hadn't a thing for her."

"Come on!" cried Donald, springing up the bank.

They went crashing through the woods, trampling on dry twigs, rustling through leaves, dodging under low branches, scrambling over brush fences, breaking the

brightest of the flaming maple boughs, till they came out upon the open fields.

"There's Polly," said Donald, pointing; "in the next pasture beyond this."

As they walked slowly across the field, Donald said—picking some rusty leaves from the golden bough in his hand—"You know what I'm going to do to-morrow, Theodora?"

"Yes," she answered; but she could say no more. She knew that on the morrow her brother was to stand up in the village church and take upon himself the vows of God. They had never before spoken together of this; but Theodora had thought it over not a little. She was glad to have him do it, because she had no doubt it was the right thing to be done, and she liked Donald to be just right; yet she dreaded it, with the feeling that it might make a separation between them.

"I know I am not half good enough," said Donald; "but Christ wants us to confess Him, and I want to. You know what the Bible says about leaving your gift on the altar till you go and get forgiven by your brother, or something like that," he said, slowly. "I know I have been outrageously selfish to you, many a time, and I think it was mean and hateful in me, and I just want you to forgive me."

"No, you haven't," she answered, with warmth. "I'm sure you have always been good to me."

Donald shook his head positively. "I was stingy about those English stamps, and I might have fixed it to have you go boat-riding with us, every time, last Spring, if I had taken a little pains; and I always made you weed the onions when we worked in the garden last Summer, and—Well, I am glad if you can't think of so many mean things as I can."

Theodora longed to say that there wasn't another girl in creation that had so nice a brother as she, but she did not know how to say anything. However, silences differ almost as much as sayings, and Donald understood hers.

"I wish you were coming with me, to-morrow," he said.

And she answered soberly, "I wish so, too."

Polly evidently saw them coming, but she waited for them, and then rose slowly enough to show that it was from choice, not necessity.

"Look! there are Robert and Miriam waiting for us," said Theodora, as they reached the road. "See, on that log under the willows."

Miriam's hands were full of purple aster-stars, and nodding plumes of golden-rod, and Robert was quite loaded with evergreen vines.

"Let us have your hats to trim like ours," said Miriam.

"See here, let's decorate Polly," cried Donald, while she was twining the evergreen wreaths.

"Yes," said Robert, "that's a capital idea. Polly may as well carry a lot of this evergreen as I. So! Polly, so!"

The heavy vines they threw about her stout neck were very graceful and pretty, but she did not seem to appreciate. She submitted, however, to gratify them, and then they all started on with her in the midst. Polly had a handsome pair of horns, which she wore with quite an air, tossing her head gently at every step; moreover, the tail, with which she slowly brushed her well-rounded sides, terminated in a long white tassel, which she might well take some pride in. She paced along with that pensive deliberation becoming a cow of the highest respectability on which eight human beings are largely dependent.

Occasionally she turned her mild, dark blue eyes on her lively escort, as if they belonged to some more thoughtless species, without her grave experience.

As she turned into the grassy yard beside the parsonage with her cortège, Faith and baby Jessie, who were sitting on the door-step, watching for them, raised as great a tumult of welcome, as two mortals so small were capable of making, and then the father and mother came to welcome them.

When Robert went to milk the cow after supper, attended as usual by Faith and the cat, the little sister confided to him:

"I have had a nice time, too; mother has been telling me such beaut'ful stories about when she was a little girl.

"Oh, dear!" sighed she, "I wish I had come out of Heaven sooner, so I could have played with her."

Mrs. Cameron cheerily helped her children to turn from the Better, which could not be had, to the Good, which could be had—a training in the gracious art of making the best of things, which was to stand them in good stead through the trials of after days.

IV.

THE LIGHTING OF A LIFE-LONG FIRE.

IN the night came the frost and the wind, and the leaves which had gloried all day in their ripe splendors of garnet and gold, fled, pale and colorless, under the glittering October stars. They whirled around corners, they dashed up at windows, they flew along the street, they hid under walls, they huddled into hollows, till the wild wind sought them out, caught them up and hurled them aloft.

When the clear, bright morning came, the wind had gone whither it listed, the leaves had nestled down upon the earth, content at last to give themselves up to her and be wrought over, through the slow Winter, into new forms of beauty. And now the trees held up the varied symmetry of their beautiful proportions in naked grace against the cloudless sky.

There is a rare, fine pleasure in that delicious stillness which hushes a New England village in the Sabbath morning, as if it were listening for the voice of God.

But the charm of deep tranquility is much stronger for the world-worn and weary than for young creatures thrilling with more life than they know what to do with; so it was no bad thing for the Cameron flock of boys and girls that there were the horse, and cow, and pigs, and hens, and cat to be fed—the breakfast to be prepared and cleared away, and the house to be put in order, even on Sunday morning. Yet these things were done with a

difference; different tunes were sung or whistled, different subjects were talked about—everything was quieter—and this morning the peace was deeper than usual, for the event of the afternoon was present in all thoughts—the Sacrament and Donald's confession of Christ.

Donald was only thirteen. Is not "a boy's will, the wind's will"? Was it safe, or right, for him so early to bind his whole future life in this solemn, public manner? Robert had done the same thing yet younger, he and Miriam together. And many had gone away from the service wondering how Mr. Cameron could let those babies take such a step.

If eternal hate could be so pledged by a boy nine years old as to animate all the training of his youth, carry him with a great army over unattempted mountains, make his name a terror to the proudest nations of earth, nerve his heart in exile, and give a bitter sweet to the poison wherein he drank death, why may not a child lay his future on the Altar of Love and consecrate his life in heroic devotion to the King of kings?

But Hamilear did not bring his son to the shrine of his gods and then turn him loose to enervating pleasures or minor ambitions. He bred the boy in the camp, inured him to hardship, kindled to achievement, disciplined him in all which it behooved a great future general to know or do.

Mr. Cameron meant to rear his son in an atmosphere of love, teaching him, day by day, how to put on the whole armor of God. Therefore he did not fear to let him pledge his fealty in the undamped ardor of his boyhood.

Donald had one companion as he stood near the Communion Table that day. A man of fifty, who had come

up from something like the agonies of death from *delirium tremens* to newness of life in Christ Jesus. Through many a hard struggle, he had got upon his feet, and had walked soberly and righteously until it was thought proper to admit him to the household of faith. They stood together,—the one scarred with many stripes from his long, hard slavery; the other revolting from it at the outset—stood to enlist under that Master whose service is freedom.

"You believe—" the Creed went on. It was a *resumé* of the Assembly's Catechism. What did they know about it—either the illiterate man or the boy? Was it anything but mockery for them to be giving assent to doctrines which the great theologians have disputed over for ages? Those great truths which meet the hunger and thirst of the heart are perhaps as nearly comprehended by the child as the philosopher.

For the rest, Donald was ready to join battle on every dogma of his Church with all a boy's hot partizanship. For a New England minister's family early listen to debates on

> "Providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,
> Fixed fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,"

with the same keen interest as a politician's children to discussions of protection and free trade.

But the reading of the long "Articles of Faith" is ended; the solemn baptismal service is over, and the earnest, stalwart man, and the hopeful, ardent boy, stand at the same altar, the latter in fulfilment of vows and prayers made in his behalf years ago. A hush of awe falls upon little Theodora's heart as her father begins to read the Covenant, and all the church rise up around the new communicants.

"*In the presence of God, angels and men, you now avouch the Lord Jehovah to be your God—*"; the quaint and solemn words, so reverently spoken, seemed to set a sacred seal on Donald. She wondered if he would be a different boy, to-morrow. After the vows, Mr. Cameron gave the right hand of fellowship, first to Mr. Graves, saying with cordial looks and tones, "The Lord keep your feet from falling, your eyes from tears, and your soul from death." Then he took Donald's hand in his, and the father's voice trembled as he repeated: "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly! And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

As her brother came back and sat down beside her, when he, as well as her father and mother, Robert and Miriam, took of the mystic bread and wine forbidden to her, Theodora felt a lonesome sense of outer darkness settling down upon her. What if they all should be in heaven at last and she left out! She walked silently home from the service, with Faith's hand in hers. Even that little hand touched her conscience. She was the only one for the younger sister to look up to, who would not lead her right. She always expected to be a Christian sometime, but she did not like to think the time had come. What great difference could it make to this little girl, saturated with Christian ideas, trained all her life to obey Christian precepts, led by the example of all she loved best, how could she help being a Christian—how could she know that she was not?

She could see the difference between a child that nestles lovingly in the Saviour's arms, and one who only stays because it is put there and held.

Theodora had a pleasant little habit of going to take

her mother's things on coming home from church, and this time, as the hat and shawl were laid in her hands, the eyes that rested on her were so full of yearning desire, the lips which said "Thank you, dear," looked so tender with anxious love, that the little girl felt that the day and hour must be near. When the mother went into her own bedroom and locked the door, Theodora was certain that she had gone to pray for her. She sat down on the doorstep with her Sunday-school book in her hand, absently watching the chickens in the yard, and wondering if God would really hear those prayers, and convert her at once.

"My daughter, should you like to go up to Pine Hills with me, to third meeting?" asked her father, pausing a moment, behind her, on his way to the study.

"Yes, father, thank you," she answered, but only with half her heart. It was a delightful ride up to Pine Hills, and the children were all fond of going with their father on these Sunday excursions to the outskirts of the town. But this time, Theodora half dreaded it; she was sure her father would talk with her about being a Christian, and what could she say? She would rather have given up the ride than risk the talk. Yet mixed with all this shrinking was a feeling that she would give the world if the change were really wrought, and she had nothing to dread in the thought of death, or of God, or duty. That feeling grew upon her as she rode up the long hills between peaceful fields or softly-sighing pines, beside her father, absorbed in silent preparation for his service; but when they arrived at the little brown school-house, which stood bracing itself against a cliff under the trees, she quite forgot it. She was pleased to find herself treated with a little distinction as the minister's daughter, and was quite set up to see that the queerly-

rigged little girl next her looked upon her with the same admiring gaze which she herself turned upon the stylish clothes of little Belle Carpenter when she came up from Boston. As the city is to the village, so is the village to the "backwoods." She was interested in everything; the rough, hacked benches, the huge, rusty stove, with a broken jug of asparagus and golden-rod upon it, the tinkle of a cow-bell just outside the open door, the odd cap and bonnet of a grandmother who "hadn't been inside a meetin'-'ouse for fifteen year, come January," the baby in the arms of a sweet-faced woman in a sunbonnet, the handsome brown face and swaggering gait of a young fellow just getting acclimated to his "freedom coat." As her father observed her eager eyes noting everything, he began to fear that curiosity would scatter whatever thoughtfulness the day had wakened. Perhaps this fear deepened his earnestness of speaking. However that might be, there were before him two or three families who never attended public worship, and he could not but set the Good News before them, and urge it upon them, as if this were his only opportunity.

As he went on, pleading with them from the words, "Behold I set before you this day life and death, blessing and cursing, wherefore choose life," Theodora felt with him keenly. She knew how anxious he was for some of those men who sat leaning their shirt-sleeved elbows on the desks before them, gazing out at the open door with serious eyes as they listened. She did hope they would be persuaded. Then the thought turned back upon herself. The solemn tones, the searching eyes of her father, carried his words into her very soul. Step by step, she felt her reluctance giving way. She almost trembled as she saw he was coming to a close, for she felt—"If he

only keeps on a little longer, I shall surely do it"—and she wished it might be so. Which is self—that within us which is almost persuaded, or that which looks on hoping or fearing we shall yield to persuasion? With one more urgent call to instant repentance, the sermon ended, and Theodora felt, with a strange mixture of regret and relief, that it had not quite turned the scale of her choice. An impressive hymn was read, which made her feel afresh that it was cruel ingratitude to keep away from the dying Saviour; but when the singing was attempted—one had "forgot his specs," another was "all hoarsed up with a cold," another tried to start the tune, but dived with it to depths where no one dared follow him; then one of the sisters attempted to pitch it, and soared aloft where not another voice would venture, grew frightened herself and dropped it. Our little girl, who was sensitive both to the ridiculous and to music, had hard work to suppress a laugh. Her father saw it, and groaned in spirit, thinking it had been worse than vain to bring her to the meeting. But he was mistaken. We are too apt to think children trifling because they notice everything and feel its influence. The little birch leaves that twinkle in every breeze are just as firmly fastened to the tree as the heavy chestnut foliage that sways only in masses, before a strong wind. The thousand things to be learned in the first years of life would never find their way into the mind if it were not sensitive as a photographic plate to every object. It is only natural, not alarming, that they should lack persistent unity of feeling.

Theodora saw her father's despairing glance, and when they had started for home, and he said to her tenderly, "Oh, my child, I wish you might be persuaded to choose

life and blessing!" she knew he had little idea how near to it she had come. She was sorry to have him troubled about her; she wished he knew that she did feel what he said; still she did not say the word that would have cheered him, and showed him how to help her. She simply said nothing, and let him suppose she thought nothing. She felt guilty for the look of sorrow in his face, and turned away. Just as she did so, a curve in the road brought them in view of the broad scene below them.

"Oh, look father, only look at Cloudcatcher!" she cried.

Cloudcatcher was acknowledged king among the hills for twenty miles around. Like a true chief, he was first to brave the rigors that befel his clan, and while only frost had fallen on all his wide domain, he had received the first snow of Autumn on his ample shoulders. All day he had worn it, glistening and white, looking cold, and proud, and inaccessible; but now the setting sun had left all the smiling valley dull and chill, touching only the highest hill-tops with a glance, to pour a flood of glory over this princely mountain. In that shining it looked as ethereal as a poet's dream. Soft tints of rose on its summit shaded down to deepest purple among the dense woods which begirt its base.

Her father's voice was full of poetic fervor as he repeated:

"'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills whence cometh my help; my help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth.' 'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people, from henceforth, even forevermore.'"

In some dim yet luminous way, the old mountain she

loved so much was like a revelation to the child. She watched it till the last ray of sunshine faded from snowy crag and darkened forest, and the giant mass stood in sombre majesty against the dusky sky. It was as if both the might of the great and terrible God and the gentleness of His protecting love had appeared before her.

It was in a thoughtful, tender mood that she reached home, and as she knelt for her nightly prayer, she did try more sincerely than ever before, in her short life, to yield herself to her Saviour.

Theodora woke, Monday morning, with a sense that something had happened—something good—and lay for a moment, feeling her way back to consciousness, before she could think what it was. When she remembered the thoughts with which she went to sleep, she wondered if it could be she was "converted." She watched herself with a serious kind of curiosity. She had often heard of astounding changes, like that in Saul of Tarsus, and she did not know but an earthquake of emotion, in which the old life should be shaken to pieces and a new life brought in, was just as likely to come to her as anyone. She almost hoped she should find herself so good and so happy, she should hardly know herself. She felt so peaceful and bright while she was dressing, that she thought perhaps the dreaded crisis was over, and she was a Christian.

In the spirit of conscientious self-denial, she put on a faded calico, because she knew her mother was anxious to have her careful of her new worsted dress. But her mother, preoccupied with her crowding Monday's work, did not seem to notice how faithfully she was trying to help, nor what she had on, until school-time, when she said, with a hurried glance:

"You will need to put on a high-necked apron, since you have on that thin dress."

"Oh, mother!" expostulated the little girl, who detested a high-necked apron.

"Yes, dear; the air is sharp this morning, and those sleeves are worn and thin; sitting so in the chilly school room, after exercising in this warm kitchen, isn' safe"—

"But I can keep on my sack."

"That is *too* warm. Put on your apron, and be quick or you will be tardy."

Theodora sauntered disconsolately along to school, with her hat tipped down over her eyes. At recess, however as the most Christian act she could think of, she forced herself to go and invite Celia Jones, whom all the girls disliked, to come and play ball with her. She was chagrined enough to have the tables of patronage turned on her by the reply:

"Oh, no; I haven't time. Can't you get some of your little mates to play with you?"

Little mates! Wasn't she in her eleventh year? And Celia Jones was barely thirteen. Little mates! As there were not always nice girls enough, and large girls too, that were ready to play with her! Did the creature suppose she invited her because she wanted her?

What is more exasperating than to have a person suppose you are asking a favor of him, when you are trying to offer one!

"Since you have so many friends, and so much older friends," she retorted, "it's just possible I may find some small child willing to play with me."

She drew up her plump figure with a dignity that made her high-necked apron appear half-an-inch shorter

and walked off, in anything but a Christian frame of mind. She dashed into a group of girls, and talked and laughed louder than any of them, just to show Celia Jones that she was quite the centre of mirth. She was thrilled with delight when Miss Hattie Curtis, one of the real young ladies, put her arm around her and walked all the way to her desk, talking to her and petting her. How would Celia Jones feel now!

Trying to forget all this, and win back right feeling, she set herself to studying with all her might, and came out of school flattering herself she had made an uncommonly fine recitation in history.

Her self-complacency was suddenly dashed at the dinner-table, by Robert giving her a terrible teasing for making a ridiculous blunder when she thought she was doing so well—all the more ridiculous, because she had given it with such a satisfied air. She recollected noticing an odd little smile under Mr. Duncan's moustache, which she supposed at the time expressed his amazement and pleasure that she remembered so much.

"Why didn't he correct me?" she exclaimed hotly—it is such a relief to find some one else to blame when we are vexed with ourselves.

"Probably he was afraid he should laugh," answered Robert.

"What makes your face so red?" asked Faith innocently.

"Nothing; it isn't red. Do eat your dinner, and not stare at me."

"Gently, my daughter, gently!" said her mother, looking at her in surprise, for she seldom spoke so rudely.

"Theodora has disgraced the family," explained Robert, confidentially, to Faith.

"Did she get whipped?" asked the child, her black eyes snapping, as she laid down her knife and fork.

"Well, no, I believe not; did you, Theodora?"

Would he never be done talking about it? she made a thrust in self-defence.

"I am not the only one in the family that makes blunders. Didn't I hear Mr. Dunmore telling somebody a little more study wouldn't be wasted on the Virgil lesson, this morning?"

The moment she had turned all eyes on Robert and gained her revenge, she regretted it—the Latin was such a sensitive spot with him! She was thoroughly out of conceit with herself, and inwardly groaned.

"Oh, dear! I believe I am worse than ever!"

By a strong effort she got back her good temper, and started for the afternoon's campaign. Miss Curtis was coming out of her gate as she passed, looking dainty as a morning glory, and walked on with her. This queen of her admiration deigned to say she really envied her such a head of beautiful brown hair, and inquired if she wasn't the youngest girl in her class, in a tone which implied that she must be quite a wonder of intellect. Will. Train, one of Miss Curtis's beaux, joined them directly, and our little girl, not understanding that the village beauty had picked her up as a convenient third party, went into school quite reinstated in her own good opinion.

At night, as Theodora thought the day all over, she ...y concluded that she must have been mistaken; she ...d no "new heart." The old faults were just as bad as ...er. Perhaps they looked more hateful to her, but she hardly noticed that fact. She did pray earnestly and resolve with a new morning to take up her Cross and fol-

low Christ. So it went on; every day an experiment, till at the end of the week, she said to herself positively: "I am the same old sixpence!" and resigned herself to the fact, not without disappointment.

Yet she was not quite the same. It is often said that every call to duty, distinctly heard and not obeyed, leaves the heart harder than before. It is not always so. Wave after wave lifts the waif higher on the strand, until one at last bears it, safe, upon the rock—and the first helped it as much as the last. This child had not yet thrown her heart wide open to the Saviour, but she heard His voice more plainly, and she felt her need of Him more deeply.

One night, some weeks later, in the mother's absence, Theodora was putting Jessie to bed. The little thing had had a great frolic in her long white night-gown, and now was kneeling by her sister's lap with the little pink soles of her feet turned up, to "say her prayers."

"'Now I lay me down to s'eep,
I pray de Lord my soul to keep'—

"Don' wan' to say an' more!" she said, springing up, shaking her fair curly head, and knitting her white forehead in a frown.

"Oh, yes, say it all; that's a good Baby; you know it all."

"If I should die—"

"No, no!" answered Baby, still shaking her head, and putting her hands behind her as if to hold back the prayer. "Baby don' wan' to die afore I wake."

"No, darling," said Theodora, reaching out to take her; but Baby feared that meant compromise, and step-

ped back, only allowing her to get hold of her night-gown, which made a little festoon between them, and showed the stubborn, dimpled knees of the reluctant suppliant. Theodora did not know what to do. It was contrary to all the habits and traditions of the family to give up to a rebellious child; still she did not want to have a struggle with little Jessie about her prayer. The older children never used authority over the younger when the parents were at home; but now they were away. Faith was put in Miriam's care, and Jessie in hers.

With a sudden thought, she asked, "Baby want to jump?"

Jessie was a springy little creature, always eager for that pleasure; so Theodora placed her on the bureau and let her spring into her arms, but just as she was on the wing for the fourth time, made a feint of not catching her. A sudden fear darted into Jessie's eyes, but she found herself caught as before, and her soft neck covered with kisses.

"Baby mos' fall!" she said, looking up half-bewildered.

"If Baby was going to fall, sister would catch her; and if Baby was going to die, the dear Lord would save her, and He would take her in His arms, and He'd love her, and He would carry her to such a pretty, pretty place where there's bright light and sweet music, and lots of dear little babies, and everybody would be just as good and love Baby so!" emphasizing with a hug and a kiss; "and Jesus would take just the nicest care of her; and if He *didn't* save her soul it might get lost, way, way off in the dark."

"Like poor Kitty in de ground?" asked Jessie, who listened in a dazed yet earnest way.

"That's what makes her afraid of her prayer!" thought

Theodora. A pet kitten had died the day before and been buried in the garden with sad obsequies, Jessie being chief mourner. "Yes, something like poor Kitty," she said, in despair of explaining any better. "Wouldn't Jessie rather be carried to that bright, beautiful place in the dear Lord's arms?"

"Wouldn't He let me fall?"

"Oh, never! Let's say the little prayer, so He will take care of Baby and Theo. too: let's say it together:

"'If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.'"

The little one repeated it with her, under her breath, as if not sure whether she wished to say it or not. Then Theodora tossed her into her crib and sang to her till she was asleep, and the twilight had darkened into evening.

She sat down by the window and watched the stars come out till all "the majestical roof was fretted with golden fire."

"If I should die before I wake," kept ringing through her mind. How dared she lie down to sleep! What if she should wake in the outer darkness, hopeless forever! She wished she were a baby, like Jessie, to be saved without any effort of her own. She wished she lived in the millenium when everybody would be good, as a matter of course. She almost blamed God that He had not converted her for all the prayers and efforts. Of what use was it to try again? She recalled the promise she had so often heard her father repeat, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." Had she not come to Him, and had He not cast her out? Still the stars fixed on her their bright, solemn gaze, and awed to silence her complaint of their Creator. Depth beyond depth seemed

to open among them, and her young spirit bowed down abashed, before its Maker, the Maker of all those glittering worlds. He must be right somehow.

"If should die before 'I wake,' should I dare to meet Him?" The picture of a loving Saviour, which she had drawn for her little sister, came back to her. "Would He take me, like that? Oh, dear! He knows I haven't really wanted to give myself all up to Him!"

A sense of shame and sorrow for being so far away from God that it should be hard to love and obey Him, stole into her heart—a longing to be at one with the dear Lord, of whose kindness she had been telling. Then she was ashamed to find her heart shrinking back with the thought, "If I was a Christian, I should have to go to the Church-meeting, and be 'examined,' and then join the Church before all the people!" She turned upon herself severely with the sentence, "If I am to be a Christian, I'll do what Christ wants me to, no matter what it is."

"Oh, God!" her heart cried out, "I don't know how to feel or act right, but for Christ's sake take me just as I am and make me over. Forgive me and save me!

> "'If I should die before I wake,
> I pray the Lord my soul to take.'"

She repeated it slowly, thinking whether she would be happy to be so near Him—feeling that she could—and then she added, "And if I should live a hundred years, I pray the Lord my soul to keep."

Perhaps the Saviour saw through that yearning young face turned upward to the stars, just that sense of weakness and need which lay hold on His infinite strength. As she went into the duties of the next days, it was not

so much watching to see if anything had happened to her, as with a steady desire to follow Christ, a constant looking to Him for strength.

Sometimes when Christ comes to dwell in a human heart, He overturns the tables of the money-changers and drives out, with a whip of small cords, those who are making His Father's house a house of merchandise. All the world can see that old things have passed away and all things have become new; a new Master has come; but sometimes, especially when He is welcomed into the heart of a child, His presence is betrayed only as when we notice that some house we pass, in our daily rounds, shows a more hospitable door at morning, a brighter light through the curtained windows at evening, sweeter flowers in the garden, and we say, "There must be a new tenant in that house."

So the day dawned, and the Day-star arose in Theodora's heart.

V.

THREE GIRLS.

WHAT is that? It sounds like the step of a horse shod with velvet, but it is one coming along the road through the pines yonder, where the needle-leaves lie three or four winters deep. You judge by his steady trot that he is drawing a carriage, but you hear no sound of wheels. There comes a sound, however, of girls laughing and talking. Now you can see the horse's head at that opening. Hannibal Cameron;—you may know him by his alert, pointed ears and proud neck. There are three girls in the buggy; they are stopping at this mossy old watering-trough under the great elm, so that we shall get a good look at them while the horse is drinking. It must be six or seven years since we met them before, and yet there is enough of the old look to know them by. That must be Faith getting out to let down the check-rein. The ground is wet and trampled into black mud in front of the trough; so she steps along one of the shafts of the carriage, resting one hand on the horse's back, till she has loosened the rein, then springs off on to the end of the trough, and stands catching in her hand the bright water that runs in a small channel of bark down from the spring. She still enjoys the freedom of short dresses, and cannot be more than thirteen or fourteen years old. That dark little face can never be pretty. In fact, Faith has settled it with herself, that it is remarkably homely, and that she must not expect people to like her. It

makes her shrink from meeting strangers. Her looking-glass tells her all about the irregular features and swarthy complexion, but takes no account of the sturdy honesty and keen intelligence which her friends see shining through them.

Miriam, who leans back in the corner of the carriage, playing lazily with the whip, is fair and graceful as a calla lily. Her hat lies in her lap, and the Summer heat just ripples the edge of her abundant brown hair, full of lurking shades of auburn, which only the sunshine can find out. Her eyes match it in hue so exactly that if you are observant of colors, you are fascinated with comparing them; if not, you feel a sense of harmony without knowing what it comes from. Beautiful eyes, without brows and lashes to correspond, are like jewels meanly set; but these have no such disadvantage. The shadow of the thick, curling lashes might give them too much softness if it were not for the clear, strong line of the eyebrows above. A cool ivory complexion harmonizes deliciously with the warm brown tints of hair and eyes. The firmly delicate moulding of her features is the true expression of purity, gentleness, and strength. Her dress of soft brown, with its blue throat-knot and linen collar and cuffs, is very simple, but whatever she wears has a certain grace and dainty neatness about it which makes it look, as her sisters say, "just like Miriam."

As for Theodora, she has one of those not uncommon faces which are, at some times, fairly beautiful; at others, almost plain.

Some faces are good for models, some for masks, and some for transparencies. Hers was of the last. Instead of dwelling in some inner chamber, and coming to look out only on great occasions, as many souls do, her very

self seems to animate every drop of her blood and glow in every particle of her flesh. It would be impossible to love her and not to love her face. One would not be likely to recall anything she said without thinking just how she looked when she said it. Her figure is of medium height, compact, elastic, healthful. Her movements are easy and free, but too eager and energetic to be as graceful as Miriam's.

But now Hannibal lifts his dripping mouth from the water, and looks around for Faith to put up the check-rein. She has barely done so, when he starts away and leaves her the picture of consternation, balanced between mud and water, on the edge of the trough.

"Whoa! you ungrateful creature. Back!" cried Theodora, seizing the reins and bringing him to position. "In with you, Faith! That's it."

"But you have taken my seat!"

"Never mind; you have been toasted long enough for this time, my nut-brown Madge. We will exchange."

The driver sat on an extra stool between the other two, and took a broadside of sunbeams, from which the others were shielded by the top of the buggy.

"This *is* nice!" exclaimed Faith, as she settled herself in her corner.

"Oh, for some boundless contiguity of shade!" exclaimed Theodora, cocking her hat to the sunward side of her head and drawing the reins.

Hannibal started at a good pace. He liked her driving. She did not altogether forget him when she got to talking, as Faith did, but kept up a pleasant understanding with him all the while, urging and sparing him just about as he thought fair. She did not worry him with nervous twitches of the bit, neither did she make him walk on

the side of the road for a dozen rods when they were about to meet anybody, as Miriam was apt to. On the whole, he approved her handling of the lines, though he would not go quite as fast for her as he would for Donald.

"Girls!" exclaimed Miriam, "do you know it was just a year ago to-day, that the letter came proposing I should go to Downington?"

"Is it? I didn't remember that," answered Theodora; "but I never shall forget how deadly pale you looked when father finished reading it, and said, 'How providential!'"

"Why? What made her so pale? What made father say it was providential?" asked Faith, eagerly. "Tell me about it. One gets a new light on many family affairs as one grows a head taller."

"I suppose father thought it was providential to have a way opened for one child to go to earning just as another went to spending. Donald was to enter college the very day Miriam was invited to commence teaching in the Downington Institute. As to why she grew so pale, she must answer for herself," said Theodora, looking around at the older sister, with a smile.

"Oh, how my spirit did faint within me!" said Miriam, rather to herself than to them.

"But why?" urged Faith, who was never satisfied without definite facts. "Didn't you want to go?"

"*Want to!*"

"Why not? I thought it was a fine situation, everybody said."

"No doubt; but I did not want to be situated. I had studied with Donald, in everything, up to that point, and been just as successful as he; and now he was to study

seven years longer—while I, who knew no more, and loved to learn just as well, was to go to teaching. It was bitter."

"I shouldn't think father would have urged you, when you felt like that," said Faith, her black eyes flashing. "You had as good a right to go on with your education as Donald. I shouldn't have thought father—"

"Don't say that, Faith. Father never knew how I felt about it. It was of no use to trouble him. I wanted to do what would help him most, and I knew it would be all he could do to meet Donald's bills."

"But, if you had stuck resolutely to your plan, as Robert did to his, don't you believe you could have done it?"

"Where would the money have come from?"

"The same place it would have done for Robert. If you had told father just what you longed to do, and how you felt, I believe he would have tried his utmost to let you have the best advantages there are for girls."

"Yes; but it would have been terribly hard. I can take care of myself now, and if I get more salary as I go on, I hope to help the rest of you girls."

"You mustn't sacrifice yourself for me, dear," said Theodora.

"I mean to make my own way, just as if I was a boy," Faith announced, with emphasis.

"There are not so very many boys that do it."

"How like a lamb led to the slaughter you did look, that morning you went away!" exclaimed Theodora, looking over her shoulder at Miriam. "It hasn't been so very bad as you expected, has it?"

"Every bit. Last Winter, I used to be waked by the factory bells at half-past four in the morning, and think

how glad I should be to go down there and work for my living, rather than go to school."

"I can't imagine it," said Theodora.

"What makes you hate it so?" asked Faith.

"It is not so much that I hate it as dread it," answered Miriam. "I may be a great coward, but when I face that roomful of boys and girls, the fear they will ask me something I don't know is like a horrible nightmare."

"You dear, foolish, naughty girl!" exclaimed Theodora. "Who expects a girl, twenty years old, to know everything? You don't set yourself up as infallible."

"I should think you would look the lessons over, so you would know all about them," said Faith.

"Look the lessons over! Don't I study till past midnight every night?"

"And wake up at half-past four in the morning! I don't wonder you are getting dyspepsia," remarked Theodora.

"Why, don't you know your lessons, then?" asked Faith, in amazement.

"There is no end to what there is to know. Ancient history, for instance, is one of my studies—a bright class that are interested to know all about it. A single word in a lesson will often send me on a two or three hours' hunt for information; and so it is about the other things. Everything shades into everything else; so that I don't see how you are ever to say you know the whole of anything."

"But you know more than your scholars do."

"I should hope so; but I want there should be nothing connected with their lessons I don't know."

"You may as well give up and come down," said

Theodora, decidedly. "You never were satisfied without perfection, in anything, and you come about as near it as anybody I know; but it will be the death of you if you don't give up the idea of reaching it all at once. Make up your mind that it is no shame to you not to know everything. Just out of your teens, too. It won't do for you to abuse your health this way. I shall tell mother of you."

"No, no! No fear of my hurting myself. I should be ashamed if I couldn't make my body serve my spirit. I am determined it shall keep awake just as many hours as I need it."

"That sounds very fine; but, in my humble opinion, it is nonsense. You may as well keep on good terms with your body. It will get the better of you in the end, if you don't. Can't I talk to you like a sage? I didn't attend Dr. Salvio's lectures on physiology and hygiene for nothing, and I warn you," turning about and shaking her head solemnly at the culprit, "that if you go on at this gait, you will have your fine constitution broken down, and be hampered all your life long. You will get to be a sickly woman, one of these years. Think of it!" with a shudder. "Whatever you do, don't abuse your health! It's no use trying to cheat Nature. She keeps her accounts well, and will bring in her reckoning, sooner or later. You are not so well now as you were when you went to Downington."

"I know a good deal more than I did then."

"I don't care. You have forgotten how to digest your dinner. Oh, girls!" exclaimed Theodora, suddenly changing the subject, "isn't it a perfect day, and wasn't Mrs. Rodgers an old angel to invite us!"

The angelic Mrs. Rodgers was the motherly widow

with whom Robert had boarded for some years. That young man had become a great favorite with her, and her kind heart had made itself very happy by planning a rich pleasure for him—sending for his sisters to come and visit her. It was a two-days' drive across the State, from River to Lake, and our light-hearted travelers were now on the last half of the way.

It *was* a "perfect day." The sky was of a heavenly blue, and large masses of clouds were sailing about in it. They were dazzling white on their sunward edges, but deepened into soft shades of dove-color and leaden blue on the shadowed side. The sun and clouds seemed to have laid their heads together to see what they could do with the mountains.

The Green Mountain range rose, a mighty rampart, to the east; massive domes, dark with forest and crag, the kingly peak of Mansfield, and the Crouching Lion in his grand repose, overlooking the rest. Against the western sky the Adirondacks reared their majestic array, more Gothic in their outlines, fainter in coloring.

The range on the east stood near and solid like the grand possibilities of earth; that in the west rose along the horizon like an ethereal vision of the Delectable Mountains of Paradise.

The girls were filled with delight in watching the changes of light and shade. Now the hills looked dark blue and solemn with mystery, and then they would ripple all over with floating cloud-shadows; and again, while a cloud shaded the foreground, as one holds a hand above the eyes to look into the distance, the sun poured down a flood of radiance which brought out the features of some distant mountain, crag, forest, avalanche, and grassy field, as if it were close at hand. Then the clouds would fall

into a reverie, and throw such a dreamy veil over the hills that they seemed ready to dissolve into thin air.

The hayfields were in every stage of progress. Here, some thrifty farmer had mowed so early that the second growth was already springing up, making "sweet fields of living green." In other meadows, the seeded grass was dimpling with every tint of delicate brown. Away on the hill-side, too far off for sound, but not for fragrance, the silent motions of the haymakers could be seen, and the oxen pacing slowly along from one mow to another with their overhanging load.

Our young travelers were in the mood to enjoy everything—a child peeping through a gate—a consequential puppy running out to bark at them—the picture seen through open barns—a mossy roof—an old well-sweep—blackberry vines wreathing the grotesque horns of a stump-fence—a brook springing down the rocks, scattering handfuls of crystals and pearls, then running to hide under the road. When their way led through the woods

"With fragrance and with joy 'their hearts' o'erflowed."

Leaves rustled softly overhead; long shadows lay along the ground; the delicious note of a hermit thrush came from the heart of the forest.

When the distant view opened to them again, through the thinned trees, it drew from them a cry of surprise and delight. Although there was clear sunshine all about them, some distant shower had woven a rainbow robe and flung it over the most graceful of the mountain brotherhood.

"Oh, if it will only wait till we get there!" exclaimed Faith. "Do drive faster, Theodora; I always wanted to touch a rainbow."

"While you are feeling of it, I will go hunt for the money-pot at the bottom of it," said Theodora.

"Sordid soul! To talk about money-pots before such a sight as that!" said Miriam.

"The things money will bring are not sordid," her sister answered.

"What would you do with your money if you found it?" asked Faith. "Do you know?"

"Yes; I know exactly what I would do, if I found a crock of gold," replied Theodora. "I would give the rest of you what you need, in the first place, and then for myself, I would go straight to Boston and get the very best musical training to be had there; then I would go to Europe and study music a year or two longer, and travel beside."

"And then?"

"Then, suppose I could sing; I should want to make people happy with it. I wouldn't be a public singer, you know, and yet how grand it would be to thrill a great audience with music and make them feel just as you do! I would sing for charity, and wherever it would be a help and a comfort. And I would have a beautiful home just outside the city—there isn't to be any bottom to this crock of gold—and I would find out poor girls that had a talent for music and teach them, and give them a start in the world. I would have books, and pictures, and flowers, and I would be generous to everybody, and do no end of good. Then when father and mother grew old, I would have them come and live with me."

"And wouldn't you ever marry?" asked Miriam.

"That would depend. If I ever found anybody that liked me well enough, and I liked well enough, I would.

But, you see I should want him to be *awfully nice* the chances are if he was grand enough to suit m wouldn't care anything about me. But wouldn't bliss, girls, to have money enough so that you coul what you wanted to and get what you liked, wi looking this way and that, scrimping and contriving denying yourself about every little thing. I am so and tired of it! But then, it's my portion in this and I may as well make the best of it. Get on, H bal! What does that guide-post say? 'Six miles to tonville.'"

"Almost there! Won't Robert be glad!"

"And sha'n't we be glad!"

VI.

LAKESIDE LODGE.

"IT'S a barouche, girls," said Miriam, peeping out between the white dimity curtains of Mrs. Rodgers' front chamber.

"Oh, glorious! We shall ride in state for once in our lives," responded Theodora, who was looking at her back hair in a hand-glass.

"If I could only have the ride, and come right back, I should like it," said Faith with a disconsolate face. "Why need I go, Miriam? I don't want to, and nobody wants me."

"Everybody wants you. We should not enjoy it at all to go and leave you behind," answered the eldest sister, putting her hand under the little, pointed chin.

"But Robert says they are so dreadfully stylish. I shan't know how to behave, and it would be better for all of you not to have me there. If it is my happiness you think about, I should enjoy it forty thousand times better, to sit down in Mrs. Rodgers' little old sitting-room and finish my book."

"Oh, you will enjoy it after the ice is once broken," said Miriam, pushing back the child's black hair, and setting her hat on her head as she spoke. She was all ready herself, and looking as dainty as a tea-rose. Miriam always was ready. "As to not knowing how to behave, this is one of the chances to learn, my dear."

"Aren't you ready, Theodora? Those horses are digging a well before Mrs. Rodgers' front gate."

"All but— Where's my bettermost pocket-handkerchief? Please put my hat in the closet, Faith. Are these pansies pretty, Miriam?" holding a little bunch of them up to her bosom.

"Yes, but they will wilt before you get there, this warm day. Let me change them for these pinks," taking a bright bunch from a little vase, and wiping their stems as she spoke. "These are more like you,—spicy and sweet."

"What a pretty thing to say."

"On your dress, or in your hair?"

"Here, in front. My hair is such a neutral brown it seems to take the expression all out of flowers. If it was a positive color now, like yours or Faith's, I should always be sticking them in it. But I do love to have the blessed things about me someway."

"Ready, young ladies?" called Mrs. Rodgers.

"Yes, ma'am, all ready!" and down they went.

She stood in the hall waiting to receive them. Her cap-frill looked as if it would give kind lodgment to all sorts of confidences; her eyes had a lively snap as if they still relished fun, and liked to forget the "old folks spectacles," which waited within call on the end of her good-natured little nose. Her mouth had few teeth and many wrinkles—the well-worn tracks of the smiles and laughter, as well as the sorrows of sixty years.

"You will pass muster," she said, patting each on the shoulder.

"I wish you would let me stay with you, Mrs. Rodgers," said Faith.

"Oh, it is such a beautiful place at Lakeside Lodge,

you will be loth to come back to my little house, I am afraid. Mrs. Walton is an elegant lady, and you will have a delightful time. I gave the driver your shawls for you to wear back in the evening. I knew you wouldn't think of them. Young things, like you, haven't much sense. You would kill yourselves, twenty times over, if it wasn't for us old folks. There, run along, dears. A happy time to ye."

She stood in the porch watching the brilliant equipage as it wheeled from the gate.

"Miriam, she looks as if she was born in a barouche; but Faithie, poor little thing, you would think she was going to a funeral. Theodory is happy, I—tell—you!" The "*you*" addressed was herself; "she won't miss anything there is a-going."

"Three nice girls," she remarked to herself as she went in and drew together the blinds of the front door, "but not a speck too nice for my Robert; not a speck!"

The span of dappled grays were curbed to walk down the village street, for it was a hot August afternoon, but they put all the spirit they could into their steps, and their silver-mounted harness glittered in the burning sunshine. Their driver, conscious of the worshipful wonder of all small boys, and of curious glances from between half-closed shutters, had the outward indifference and the inward exaltation of a whole grand procession.

"Who are those young ladies in the Walton carriage?"

"Why, those must be Mr. Cameron's sisters that were to meeting with him, Sunday. Mrs. Walton must ha' sent for 'em to tea."

This was a scrap of conversation held behind several pairs of blinds as they passed.

The street outstripped the village, and ran through the

woods for half a mile or so. Then one was surprised by a low, handsome wall of hewn granite which transformed these woods to "grounds."

The greys pranced more proudly than ever, when they turned from the highway into a broad, smoothly-gravelled drive, which passed through an imposing granite gateway into the maple grove, crossed a rustic bridge at the foot of a lovely dell, wound up a finely-graded hill, and then swept triumphantly into full view of Lake Champlain, blue as the heavens, bridged with a pontoon of floating glory from the western sun. In the foreground, flowers, shrubbery, an aristocratic-looking mansion, a velvet lawn, which sloped to the water's edge. As the carriage rolled up to the door, the faces of the young girls within it were radiant with pleasure at this unexpected burst of beauty. As they went up the broad granite steps, bordered with arms of glowing geraniums, a view of the lake, and the mountains beyond it, rose before them like a glorious picture richly framed; for the front door stood open, and the hall, wide as a street, and lined with family portraits, ran straight through the house to an opposite door which overlooked the scene. A young man, reading, on the back veranda, was visible in the foreground.

Before they had time to ring, a lady came from the darkened parlor to meet them, saying, with the kindest of smiles, "Mr. Cameron's sisters need no introduction here."

She was tall—substantial enough to be stately; not too stout to be graceful. Silver-grey curls clustered about her forehead and peachy cheeks. A cobweb of rich lace, caught here and there with a pale-blue bow, heightened her matronly dignity by the suggestion of a cap. Rich

lace lay caressingly about her neck, which was still fair, though no longer plump. The same was true of her hands. The soft lace at her wrists seemed fond of them. The solitary ring she wore—a cluster of diamonds—reminded one of her long-past wedding-day. Her black dress, of some transparent, silky material, tastefully recognized prevailing style without being servile to it. All her features and her movements had a high-bred refinement about them. She received her young guests with a gracious cordiality. Neither she nor they dreamed that she was welcoming to her beautiful home one destined to stir its tranquil life to the depths.

The house was full of the dreamy, fragrant stillness of an August afternoon. To remember the blazing heat out of doors, while sitting in those large, cool rooms, sipping iced lemonade, hearing Mrs. Walton say pleasant things in a soft, clear voice, and seeing some rich or interesting object wherever the eyes wandered, gave one the impression that trouble and discomfort could never find their way into this enchanted mansion.

But let us listen, with Mrs. Rodgers, to the girls' own account of their visit, when they came home to the cottage, about half-past nine in the evening, with their brother Robert, who had joined them at tea.

Little Mrs. Rodgers sat by the table with her knitting-work, intently counting the stitches as she was "setting the heel."

"Thirteen, fourteen— Well, children, what kind of a time did you have?"

She dropped her spectacles to the end of her nose, and settled back in her rocking-chair to knit and listen.

"Oh, delightful!" answered the two eldest girls, with an expressive sigh of satisfaction.

"And how did our Faithie get along?"

"It wasn't quite so bad as I expected," answered Faith, slowly, with her eyes fixed on the light. "Mrs. Walton was very nice. If I was a beautiful lady, and had an awkward, bashful girl come to see me, I would treat her just so! She let me look at engravings ever so long, and just spoke to me often enough to let me know she hadn't forgotten me; and she didn't ask me anything, but just told me something interesting about them. Then she turned me loose in the grounds, and I had a lovely time there."

"Mrs. Walton complains that you don't come to see them half as often as they would like, Robert," said Miriam.

"There, that's what I am always telling him," said Mrs. Rodgers. "They have invited him up there, I don't know how many times, and tell him to make it a home, like; and I just have to drive him off whenever he goes."

"They are too grand to suit me," said Robert. "I would a hundred times rather spend an evening, when I have it, in this cosy little sitting-room, with Mrs. Rodgers and my newspaper."

"Too grand!" exclaimed Theodora. "I think it is charming. I never felt more at home. 'I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls,' and I tell you I liked it! I would ask nothing more delightful than to be such an elegant, cultivated, fascinating lady as Mrs. Walton, and live in such a beautiful home. Why, Robert, don't you think she is beautiful?"

"I like a plainer kind of people better. She is so very polite, I never feel sure she is sincere."

"Did you see Mr. Walton and Ben?" asked Mrs.

Rodgers, scratching her head with one of her knitting-needles.

"Yes, indeed; we saw the whole family," said Miriam. "Mr. Ben is quite an exquisite, isn't he?"

"He looked cool as our ice-cream, in his Summer suit, but I didn't fancy him at all," said Theodora. "He acts as if he was made for some other planet, and put here by mistake, and nothing was quite good enough for him. But I do like that older brother."

"What!—Jack wasn't at home, was he?" asked Mrs. Rodgers.

"Came this very afternoon. Mrs. Walton received a telegram soon after we went, and he followed it, about an hour later, with his two little girls."

"And his wife?"

"She is at Saratoga. A nursery-maid came with the children."

"Pretty children? Where *is* my knitting-needle?"—hunting over the table and the floor. The whole group join in the search.

"Why, Mrs. Rodgers, it is sticking up in your hair, like a liberty-pole," said Faith, finally.

"La sakes! what an old woman I am getting to be! What was you a-saying about Jack Walton's children?"

Each of the young ladies looked to the other to answer.

"They were beautifully dressed," said Miriam. "Yes, rather pretty."

"Pretty behaved?"

"I don't think they were, at all," said Faith, seeing that no one else seemed disposed to answer. "The littlest was well enough, but the other went flirting her little skirts like a peacock's tail, and casting glances at herself in the long mirrors. When her father held out his hand to

her, she struck at it. Then she went sidling up to Robert, trying to make him notice her, and making saucy little answers when he did talk with her. I don't think she is a nice child at all. Oh, Mrs. Rodgers, you don't know how awful it was when we went out to tea," she went on, sitting down on a wooden foot-stool at her feet. "Mrs. Walton took Robert's arm, and Mr. Walton offered his to Miriam, and she walked out as dignified and graceful as you please; and the New York Mr. Walton and Theodora were talking and laughing, and they went out together; so there was left that terribly stylish, fastidious Mr. Ben and poor little scared Me! He thought he must give me his arm, and I took it, and I felt like a fool. He needn't flatter himself he hated to take me any worse than I hated to be taken. I wish people would just go along and eat, if they are hungry, and not make such a parade. I thought it would be dreadful at supper, for he couldn't think of anything to say to me any more than I to him. But it happened that Miriam was on the other side of him, so he was happy, and let me alone."

"Wasn't the supper-table beautiful?" exclaimed Theodora; "with silver, and glass, and flowers. Oh, I do like pretty things! Such nice things to eat, too! What is this 'Benjie,' as his mother calls him? Is he in college, or what?"

"What," answered Robert.

"He was in college, but his health was delicate, I believe, and they took him out," explained Mrs. Rodgers.

"So what does he do now?"

"Dawdles around generally in a genteel way," answered Robert.

"Now I do say Benjie Walton was about the prettiest *little* boy ever I saw," said Mrs. Rodgers, snapping her

little black eyes at him. "Robert is so smart himself he ha'n't any patience with folks that don't 'pear to 'complish much; but I have faith to believe that Ben will turn out somethin' more than common yet."

"Oh, yes, the ladies all admire him, Auntie Rodgers not excepted," said Robert, picking up her ball, and reeling off the blue yarn to her.

"Did you admire him, Miriam?" asked Faith. "He talked with you when he did with anybody."

"No," answered Miriam, with some hesitation. "I dislike that supercillious air he has; still he said a good many things that interested me, and he seems to know a good deal about music, and pictures, and poetry."

"Oh, yes," said Robert. "He writes poems and plays the guitar."

"Didn't you think Mr. Walton himself, the father, was a fine-looking man?" asked the little widow.

"Yes, rather imposing; he would look better, though, if he wouldn't wear a wig."

"How do you know he does?" asked Faith.

"There is no proper coast line between his hair and his neck," answered Theodora. "His well-oiled brown hair curls up its ends disdainfully from his old skin. It needn't be so proud of its youthful appearance, for an honest shock of white hair, or even a shiny bald crown, would look better in its place."

"That's a great head for business, though," said Robert.

"Yes, indeed, he has just *made* Waltonville," added Mrs. Rodgers.

"And, what is more, he has made himself, as he told me," remarked Theodora.

"Yes, he started, a *poor* boy; we used to go to school

together, and I remember how his toes used to peek ou of his old shoes; but he has made his way right straigh ahead. Been honest and honorable, and brought othe folks along with him, too. Mrs. Walton, she was bor rich. The Jackmans are a fine old family. Folks ma say what they please, I shall always stick to it, Mrs. Wal ton ain't proud, but if she's proud of anything, it's he grandsir, and great-grandsir, and great-great-grandsir You jest get her a tellin' about these portraits in th front hall, and you will see all the pride there is in her I don't say, though, but what she's a grain proud of he two boys."

"She well may be proud of the New York Mr. Wal ton," said Theodora. "I think he is about the mos agreeable gentleman I ever saw. He is so entertaining and kind! It was as if a refreshing breeze swep through the house when he got home. He is just delight ful; and as for Mrs. Walton herself, I am dead in lov with her! We sat on the back veranda, and saw th sun set across the lake, and then we sang till the star came out. You can't think how beautiful it was!"

"So was the ride home," said Miriam. "Though th stars are out, it seems as if the twilight was not going t fade quite away in the west, all night."

"Both the Mr. Waltons came home with us," said Faith, "and Mr. Jack drove. What did they name a regular gentleman like him Jack for?"

"He wasn't a regular gentleman when he was born, my dear," said Mrs. Rodgers, laughing. "His name is Jack man, for his mother's family; but everybody always called him Jack, and I guess they always will. It don't make much difference what you name children, folks will al ways think up somethin' else to call 'em."

"Fine girls," remarked Mr. Jack Walton to his brother, as they were driving home.

"The eldest has something rather elegant about her," answered Mr. Ben, with an air of condescending candor. "The little one is painfully bashful, and as for the middle sister, she is too demonstrative. She has no style."

"We are getting critical," said the elder brother, with a careless laugh. "I have had style enough. It is refreshing to me to meet a fresh, natural girl, who says what she thinks and keeps the shape she was made. Her singing is really delightful."

"Yes," replied the other, indifferently, "with cultivation it might be something rather extra."

"Why, my boy,"—Mr. Ben no longer liked being called 'my boy' by his brother—"such voices as hers are rare as diamonds. It is a shame it should not be cultivated. It must be."

And Mr. Jack Walton lapsed into silent reflection, which led to a consultation with his mother, on reaching home; then to an exchange of letters with his wife, and, the third day, a call at Mrs. Rodgers'. As he walked up the path between the lilac bushes, the little cottage seemed running over, like a bird-cage, with music. It was a fresh, dewy morning; doors and windows were open. The song swelled and died away—was dropped, as if forgotten, then picked up again, in just that way that shows the singer is moving about, busy with other things, singing half unconsciously. He paused and listened a minute or two; then with a quick, decided nod, as if fortified in some opinion, went on. As he stepped into the little porch, the singer came to the door. The trill on her lips broke into a laugh.

"A little more, Mr. Walton, and I should have shake this dusting-cloth in your face."

She had a blue veil wound like a turban over h hair, and sweeping-gloves on her hands.

"Do come in; I assure you, the sitting-room is thoroug ly dusted."

"No doubt of it, since I see what hands did it," a swered Mr. Walton, gallantly. "Mrs. Rodgers is fort nate in guests that know how to make themselves usefu But let us sit right down here"—and taking a chair fro the hall for her, he sat down on the doorstep, fannir himself with his Panama hat. "I called on busines and you are the very young lady I wanted to see."

"Indeed! This is a new sensation to be called upo on business," said Theodora, pulling off her dusty glove "What can it be?"

"You know my little girls?"

Theodora nodded slightly; the ground was indisput ble so far.

"They are too young to go to school or to need a regul governess, and yet they are old enough to be learnir something. Especially I want them to start early in the music, and have their fingers used to the piano from t first."

Whereto did this tend? wondered Theodora, unwin ing the veil from her head while she listened. She d not feel eager to initiate the young Waltons in knowledg if that was it.

"So much for what I want," said Mr. Walton, twi ing his hat between his thumb and fingers. "Now y want, and ought to have, the best advantages for music education that are to be had. If you have a mind come into my family and teach my little girls, two hour

day, I will provide you with the best instruction New York affords, in singing and piano. Can we strike a bargain?"

Mr. Walton looked up at the young lady as he made his proposal. He saw a sudden light come into her face, and noticed that she drew a deep breath; yet she did not answer on the instant, and when she did, the shape of her thoughts amused him.

"That would be a very poor bargain for you, Mr. Walton. That best musical instruction costs a fearful sum, and all I could do for your little girls, in two hours a day, would not half pay for it."

"That is my look-out," said he, smiling. "This is business, you know. When I propose a bargain to a man, he doesn't take much time to consider whether there is any chance of my cheating myself. Would you be satisfied with it on your part?"

"Satisfied!" exclaimed Theodora, looking at him, her face full of earnestness. "It is such a chance as I have been longing and praying for, but did not expect to have."

"I am afraid there was not much faith in your prayers," said Mr. Walton, with a pleasant laugh.

"I think there will always be more hereafter," she said feelingly.

"You will come, then," he said, rising; it was not his way to waste time talking over a decision once made.

"If my father and mother approve."

"Of course. We go home the second week of September. Shall you be here then?"

"I must go home first."

"Join us on the way, then; we can easily arrange that. Good-morning."

And with a cordial smile he bowed, walked quickly

down the path, sprang into his jaunty buggy, picked up the reins, and drove off.

Theodora stood looking after him till there was nothing to be seen but a cloud of illuminated dust, and then went in to tell her sisters the sudden change that had come over her fortunes.

"Girls, I have found the end of the rainbow! I have the desire of my heart! I am to go to New York this Fall and study music under the best masters!"

VII.

A TURN IN THE TIDE.

THE next afternoon Miriam and Theodora went down to "the store," to walk back with Robert when he came to tea. Faith preferred to stay behind and finish a book, as they were to start for home the next morning.

It was one of those country stores where you may find everything you really need to put on or put in you—the utensils necessary to cook your dinner or till your farm—school-books and stationery, if you thirst for knowledge—and fifty different patent medicines, any one of which will infallibly cure you, if you are sick. It was uncommonly large and well-stocked, as it belonged to Mr. Walton, who had a plenty of capital, but had nothing to do with the business personally.

When his sisters came in, Robert was trading with a customer whose eyes were level with the counter. He was rather above medium height, with a manly pair of shoulders, and a face just as frank and friendly as it was in boyhood. Strength and self-reliance had been added to it, as well as a beard, but the clear eyes that were looking kindly down on the little girl measuring slate pencils, seemed quite unchanged. His eyes and Theodora's were alike in color, blue as violets; but his had a steady light; hers were changeful as a mountain lake.

"I am glad you have come," he said, looking up at his sisters with a smile. "I have something to tell you. Just

make yourselves comfortable till this young lady is waited upon."

Miriam sat down in one of the flag-bottomed kitchen chairs, while Theodora went straying about the store to see what she could see.

When the small customer had made her choice with mature deliberation, and paid her penny, like a woman with money to spend, the clerk put away the box of pencils, flung two or three pieces of calico back on their shelves, and vaulted over the counter.

"Now then, what is it you have to tell us?" asked Theodora, bringing along his hat which she had noticed in the counting-room.

"This afternoon, Mr. Walton drove up and asked if Mr. Morse could spare me for a few minutes; he wanted to speak with me, so I took a seat with him and rode off, wondering what was up.

"He went through a long preamble to the effect that, though he had, perhaps, the largest business in this part of the State, he always kept the run of the young men in his employment—he never forgot that he started with nothing except himself, and 'attained some little success;' I couldn't imagine what he was driving at. Then he said he was always pleased to find business ability and integrity combined in a young man—"

"That means you," said Miriam.

"And partnership," said Theodora.

"Better than that," said Robert, tossing up the yard-stick, and catching it with a certain sleight of hand. "He said he had thought of putting me in charge of the store here, but a remark dropped by one of my sisters had suggested another plan to his mind."

"One of your sisters!" exclaimed both the girls at once.

"Yes, you did a neat thing for me without knowing it, whichever of you 'twas. She remarked, he said, that I had a strong inclination to farming. He asked if I knew anything about it, and I told him about my Summers with Uncle David, and so forth. He said he had a good deal of valuable property in Minnesota, which he was not realizing much from. He wanted a man there whom he could trust. It would be worth his while to make it a good chance for me if I chose to go out there —take a part of his land and rent the rest, and see to things generally. Told me to think it over, and let him know in a week."

"What did you say?"

"I said, as far as I was concerned, I did not need ten minutes to think it over. I would go. But I should want to consult the family."

"Oh, Robert, that is *so* far off!" said Miriam.

"If I am away, I am away, whether it's a hundred miles, or a thousand," he answered.

"Are you sure you would like it better?" asked Theodora.

"Certain. If I couldn't do better, I would stay here and be contented; but I don't *like* it. Should you? Here comes a man and spends half an hour trying to beat me down ten cents on a hoe. Next, there is a woman after a calico dress; I take down a dozen pieces, one after the other, and she wonders if this will wash, and yanks that to see if it will tear, and is afraid the next one won't be becoming to her, and wants to know whether I would rather have the brown one or the drab one if I was she, and when she has concluded she might as well take the first one she looked at, she tells me I'm very dear; she thinks Jones had the same thing last week for two

cents less, and pays her money as if she was being cheated. Then comes, perhaps, young Mrs. Florville to match worsteds and trimmings. She paws things all over, and snarls them up, and then goes off, saying she might have known she couldn't find what she wanted in a country store. Sometimes there's a rush, and I fly around, and serve everybody as fast as I can; still the rest will be looking sour as choke-cherries because I don't wait on them all at once. If trade is dull, and I think it is a good chance to read a bit, or write a letter, in comes two or three girls that haunt the store; they want to look at everything, and they buy nothing. I don't see what on earth they do it for!"

"Why, you innocent youth," said Theodora, pulling his whiskers, "they like to talk with the clerk."

"Oh, pshaw!" retaliating on a curl of hers, "that can't be it."

In fact, Robert Cameron was so straightforward and business-like, that a great many "nods and becks, and wreathed smiles" were wasted on him by the rustic beauties of Waltonville. Coy glances were shot into those honest blue eyes without the owner's even knowing he had been aimed at. There were two or three young ladies in the village who were among his best and dearest friends there, but they were not these who "haunted the store."

"But it seems so lonesome for you to go away there," sighed Miriam.

"It cannot be much lonesomer than it was here when I first came. I should be ashamed to tell how mortally homesick I was the first two or three weeks. When I locked myself into the store all alone for the night, and went up to my dreary room overhead here, and thought

of the rest of you all at home,—if I had been a girl, and could have cried, I should have got over it sooner."

"I think it is awful to sleep all alone in a large building like this," said Miriam.

"Why do you do it?"

"Oh, somebody needs to be here in case of burglars or fire, you know."

"I don't wish you to be here all alone—'in case of burglars or fire!' Why can't you have some one room with you—that little clerk at least."

"Jimmy? Oh, I would much rather room alone. I don't mind it now, I am used to it. I am only too glad when they are all gone. One great nuisance of the life here is the company, evenings; especially in cold weather. Men want some warm place to get together and talk. Mr. Morse is a story-teller, and of course he wants an audience. Of a Winter evening there is always a circle of men and boys gossiping around the stove. I haven't so much respect for my fellow-men as I used to have; they have such a relish for overhauling characters, and retailing low stories."

"You never wrote home about these disagreeable things, Robert," said one of his sisters.

"What's the use? It would have set mother to worrying. I believe the thing that roiled me more than anything else, till I got used to it, was to see the difference in the way people were treated in the store. You know, father and mother always treated poor people with all the more kindness because they were poor, and trained us so; and it used to make me wrathy to see how Mr. Morse would snub a shabby body, and then be all smiles to the next comer, if he only had plenty of 'tin.' They say he has a gift for steering clear of bad debts. Poor people

are afraid of him. There he comes now, and we can go."

Mr. Morse came in, greeted the young ladies jocosely, related a short anecdote, illustrated with many gestures, and then the three Camerons started for the cottage, walking slowly along the path under the maples, which answered for the sidewalk to the village street.

"I hate to think of you living a lonesome, disagreeable life over here all this time," said Miriam.

"I haven't; no, indeed. I said it was lonesome at first. I had been used to such a pleasant home, and so many friends, that it was a dismal change. I don't wonder so many boys go to the dogs when they are shaken out of the nest. There are chances enough in a little village like this, even. But I found good friends before long. I went into Sunday-school at once, and the weekly prayer-meeting, and that was introduction enough to the best people here.

"No, indeed, Miriam; it hasn't been lonesome nor disagreeable; and if it was necessary, I could go on in this line of business to the end contentedly enough; but when the work opens before me that I like of all things, and think myself best fitted for by nature, I am glad."

"And I am glad for you, Robert," said Theodora, slipping her hand into his. They went along, swinging the clasped hands like two children.

"So am I, if it is the best thing," said the other sister.

"How many times I have laughed, Miriam, to remember my first day in the store, and how you wanted me to go into it because it was clean work! The very first thing I was set to do was to go down cellar and clean up where a barrel of kerosene had been leaking.

"Oh, I like to be out-of-doors, and see things grow," and

he breathed deep as he said it. "That Minnesota life looks free and manly, compared with this. Some men have a native love of trade; but as for me, I like the earth for a creditor best. It is a pity to have wasted these years before getting at my real business; but it couldn't be helped, as I know."

"I think they are not wasted," said Miriam. "This dealing with people has given you a kind of education that will be useful anywhere."

"I don't know about that. The money I have saved will be useful, anyhow."

The Waltonville prayer-meeting had about the same elements of the spiritual and the formal, the refreshing and the dull, as its sisters in other small villages. It was varied that evening by a strong reinforcement in the singing, and by a talk from Mr. Walton, of New York. His ringing tones and crisp sentences waked up the sleepy. His style was marked by that air of briskness—of intending to convert the world without any more fooling—which distinguishes a city exhorter from his country brother. He told stories of mission-school work which moved both tears and smiles, and left his old townsmen impressed with his goodness and pleased with his brightness.

When meeting was over, many of Robert's friends crowded about to say good-bye to his sisters; for they had made acquaintances, paid visits, and gone on pleasant excursions not herein recorded.

As the minister shook hands with them, he said: "Tell your father that his son is a treasure in this parish. He is ready to help in everything good. He doesn't talk about religion as much as some—not as much as I sometimes wish he would; but the simple sincerity of his Christian character gives him a grand influence among

the young people; and, when he does speak or
meeting here, we all feel that he means what he s
wants what he asks for. His class of boys in S
school think the world of him; and it is worth
thing to them to have such a true, strong young r
their friend when they are growing up."

As the young man in question was walking hon
his eldest sister, just after, he was saying: "It se
me, Miriam, an ordinary man like me can be of m
use in a new country than in an old State like thi

Real use, in his vocabulary, was likely to m
that would outlast this world.

VIII.

THE YEAR IN NEW YORK.

THE same September evening that Robert Cameron, full of hope and resolution, set out for his new Western life, his sister Theodora was alighting before a handsome stone-front on Brooklyn Heights, much wondering what was to be her fortune within those walls. From the day the plan was broached, Theodora had been looking forward to her first music-lesson with dread and hope and much curiosity. Had she really musical talent, or did her friends think so because they knew no better?

When the eventful day arrived, and her teacher was ready to test her voice, her throat was so dry she could hardly utter a sound, and she laid hold of the piano to keep herself from shaking visibly.

"Did I ask you for a *tremolo?*" demanded the master, knitting his black Italian brows, and shaking his heavy mane. "Will you now give to me one firm tone?"

His savage manner, instead of scaring, roused her, and she did give a firm tone, and went on, doing what she was bidden.

"Agzecräble!" he cried presently, clapping his hands over his ears. "You have had wrong method. You have ruined your voice!"

Her heart sank down like a stone. It was all in vain, then. How disappointed they would be at home! How

ashamed she should feel, going back to the village choir, and telling them why!

He gave her other exercises, and she sang them with the freedom of desperation.

"When will you next come to me, Miss?" he inquired when the hour was through, and she turned to go.

"I'll not come again," she answered in some surprise.

His face darkened. "Why then came you this once, if you come no more?"

"I wanted to learn to sing. If my voice is ruined, it is of no use."

"W'at did I say? Your Anglese language is so strong! Your voice is seeck, it is not dead. I shall cure it. You shall learn to sing. Do but w'at I tell you, you shall sing like one nightingale!"

The heart of stone became a heart of flesh. So she went to work in earnest, doing what he told her; sometimes exasperated by his outrageous severity, sometimes cheered through weary hours of practice by the pleasure he betrayed in her success. From him, she usually went to her piano teacher, who, being an American, never forgot that he was a gentleman and she a lady, although he was master and she pupil. She studied hard and practiced indefatigably, yet her enthusiasm was often shaded by despair. She heard so much fine music that she was kept in a very lowly state as to her own powers and attainments. But so coming into the kingdom of heavenly harmony like a little child, she was growing unawares.

Mr. Walton claimed, as a part of the contract, that she should sing and play for him, every day. To throw himself into a luxurious lounging chair, and listen to her for half an hour or so, after dinner, was a delicious rest from the intense activity of the day; she knew how deeply he

enjoyed it, and solaced herself many a time when she was disheartened, striving for the unattainable, with thinking, "If I can give such comfort and refreshment to anybody, I ought to thank God and take courage."

At first she was quite dazed by the apparent knowledge of people she met in musical circles, but it was not long before she observed that there is quite as much cant in art as in religion, and that a glib outflow of pet phrases of criticism does not necessarily prove a discriminating and original critic.

Two hours of each day were faithfully spent, instilling the first elements of knowledge into the little Waltons. The youngest of these was an affectionate roley-poley little creature, much given to hugging her papa and to shocking her mamma with her untameable tongue. Being simple-hearted as a rabbit, she was continually imposed upon by her sister, a year and a half older. If Adèle said in a cajoling tone, "Sissy would rather have the nice bread and butter than the old plum-cake, *wouldn't* she?" Lily would accept the statement and not dream of any sinister motive, till she saw the plum-cake rapidly disappearing in her sister's mouth.

As for Adèle, she did not prove a precocious pupil; but Theodora observed that in one art, she was an adept; that of managing her mother.

Mrs. Walton was fair, graceful, stylish. When things went to please her she was sweet; when they went otherwise, she was sour. She was fond of saying she had always had her own way, and she always meant to have it; a sufficiently selfish and unreasonable announcement for any person whatever, in a world like ours, but what for a disciple of the Master, whose first lesson is, Deny thyself!

And Mrs. Walton professed to be a Christian. She

was in the habit of remarking that a Church-member must draw the line *somewhere*. Theodora once ventured to suggest that between right and wrong might be a good place to draw it; but the reply was, that one could never tell where that was. So the lady drew it between the opera and theatre; between dancing and cards. The idea of drawing the line the hither side of fretfulness, vanity, and selfish wilfulness seemed hardly to enter her mind. At first, Theodora was simple enough to take it for granted, when she appeared silent and out of sorts, that something had happened to make her so.

So when Mrs. Walton fell into a sullen mood, the new inmate of her house would go to her room, quite miserable, and lay her memory on the rack to discover what she had said or done to give such deep offense. In course of time, she learned that it was Mrs. Walton's habit, if she had a backache, or a headache, or an ill-fitting dress, or a careless servant, to treat the whole family as if they were responsible for it. So her manner was liable to change, in an hour, without any known reason, from the most cordial and complacent to the cold and petulant. To live with a fitful and unruled disposition, was a new and not useless discipline to Theodora.

In worldly affairs, Mr. Walton was considered a safe though bold operator. In religion, he was doing a large business on a small capital; a dangerous thing, liable to end in bankruptcy. Kind, liberal, energetic, a bright and fluent off-hand speaker, he was a favorite worker in the Church and the Y. M. C. A.

His Sundays were so full with family prayers—for the only time during the week—morning service, evening service, a class of young ladies in the civilized Sunday-school, a class of large boys at the wild Sunday-school,

and the reading of two or three religious newspapers, that few moments were left for the reading of the Bible or prayer. Week-days were still more crowded; so that the direct intercourse of his soul with its Saviour was hurried and slight.

Meanwhile, the world's ways of action were sweeping about him in a mighty current. The result was such as any soul is likely to reach, living in the same way. The spiritual fervor which thrilled through his prayers and exhortations when he was first converted—the year after his going to the city—died away. He was held to Christian work by habit, rather than by love to the Saviour, or a longing to save. The mainspring of Church work became an ambition to push it beyond other Churches. In the Sunday-school class of young ladies, he found it pleasant to be admired and confided in; with the rough boys of the Mission-school, he was satisfied if he could amuse them and hold their attention.

To labor is *not* to pray.

Mrs. Cameron would have found less solace in the thought that her daughter was in a "Christian home," if she had understood the tone of its Christianity.

The sweetest time in Theodora's day was the little space between dressing and breakfast, when she sat with her Bible in her hand and the beautiful harbor before her, drinking in strength for the day. One morning she was in her favorite place by the broad window at the back of her room, deep in peace, bathing her soul in beauty and stillness. She was looking far across the shining sea, with its twinkling ripples—down to Governor's Island, with its great round fort, and beyond it, across the light-grey water, to some long blue line, which might be either sky or shore. Through the rigging of silent ships she could see the out-

lines of the Jersey shore, one long stretch of solid ground, with a crest of tree-tops, and beyond it a dim, dreamy table-land of hills. Right opposite lay the great city, to her all motionless and majestic, with walls and spires and bristling masts—bordered all about with messengers from every shore under heaven—which had folded their white wings at her feet, and stood waiting her pleasure. Ferry-boats were shooting like swift shuttles, with a silver thread of foam behind them, weaving together the mainland and Long Island shore.

She looked down upon the beauty and splendor of the great city and its haven, too far above for the din or the squalor to reach her. It seemed as if the world must be full of peace and prosperity.

At first the great city seemed less brilliant and less grand than she had fancied it would. But when her imagination had once lighted on the ground, she began to enjoy it richly. It was such a pleasure to see, every day, some place or person she had read about in the little village among the hills, and be thrilled for herself by music and eloquence such as she had only heard of before. Never did a more eager pair of blue eyes scan the beautiful things and the motley throngs of Broadway.

One day, her piano-teacher wished her to have a piece of music which he had left at the house of another pupil, so she went along with him. They were ushered into a sort of library drawing-room, and at the same time into a delightful atmosphere of home-life. The books looked inviting, the pictures and the knicknacks ready to tell some interesting story. The spirit of the whole was summed up in the little lady who turned from her writing-desk in the bay-window to welcome them. Mr. Vanderberg was evidently a frequent and favorite guest at

the house. Mrs. Leighton insisted that they should both stop to lunch, which was just ready, so that before she knew it, Theodora was enjoying keenly a new circle in a new home. The children were intelligent, eager, and interested in whatever came up. You never know a person till you see him among children, and she was amazed to see the dignified and exacting Mr. Vanderberg unfold in the most gracious fashion among these young things, who seemed to claim him as their special visitor.

"Your name, Miss Cameron, has pleasant associations for me," said Mrs. Leighton, as they sat at lunch. "It carries me back to my childhood, on a dear old Vermont farm. The Camerons were our nearest neighbors and best friends."

"Vermont! Is it so?" exclaimed Theodora, in pleasant surprise. "That is my State."

"Indeed? Who knows but your father is my old schoolmaster—John Cameron! Where was he born?"

"In Standish; and his name *is* John; he is a minister."

"Now isn't that delightful!" exclaimed Mrs. Leighton, shaking hands again across the corner of the table, her face beaming with pleasure. "Do ask him if he remembers carrying little Molly Ritchie on his back down the Calden Hill!"

"Why—what—tell me, mamma, when was that?" begged the little boy who sat next her, patting her arm impatiently.

"Oh, it was when your mamma was a wee bit toddlin' thing," she answered, laying her hand over his and looking down at him with sunny eyes, "and a company of us children were playing in the woods—we heard a great rustling in the leaves on the ground, and somebody raised

the cry: 'A bear!' and the children all began to run a fast as they could. Everyone for himself, and the be take the hindmost! And the hindmost happened to b your little mamma, my dear. I was a round litt dumpling, and couldn't get on very fast; the rest of th children were all leaving me behind, and I was frightene almost to death. I thought the bear would eat me u sure. I suppose Johnny Cameron heard me cry; at ar rate, he looked over his shoulder, and the moment h saw me, he came and caught me up on his back and r down the hill with me. I don't think I ever felt quite relieved and safe in all my life as I did when he drew m two fat arms around his neck and began to run down th hill."

"Was there really a bear? How old was Johnny? asked two of the children.

"I suppose he was nine or ten years old. There h been a report of a bear seen by some hunters in t woods, but I think likely there wasn't one, short Labrador. It was all the same to us, though, as if had been growling at our heels."

"The story carries internal evidence that it is the sa John Cameron," said Theodora, with a fond pride. "H father is just the man to grow from that boy. Nobo will be left to the bears that he can help."

"And he has a young lady daughter like you! have n't seen him since he was of your age. How f time does fly, to be sure!"

"Oh, there are three of us older than I," said The dora, laughing.

"Is it possible! You must tell me all about the Mr. Vanderberg, you have done a good deed to-da bringing this young lady here," she said, as they left t

dining-room. "I can't let you take her away with you; we must have a good chat first."

It was heart-warming to Theodora to talk of home to so interested a listener, and Mrs. Leighton found it hardly less so to hear her weave descriptions and watch her glowing face as she answered her questions about every member of the family.

"Now, when will you come again?" said the hostess, as she rose to go. "Can't you come to dinner and spend the night the next time you take your lessons? I want you to meet Mr. Leighton. And I shall have another catechism ready for you by that time. You must count our house a home, where you are welcome any day and any hour of the day. We are busy people, and cannot always command our time to visit with friends as much as we would like; but if you will enjoy it to come like one of ourselves, and when we are engaged amuse yourself with books or the children, or nestle down on a lounge and rest, I should love to have you. Come to lunch or to dinner as suits your convenience, any time."

Theodora soon found that this hospitable invitation was sincere, and going to the Leightons' became one of her chief pleasures.

Mr. Leighton was on the editorial corps of an influential city paper—a man of great information, decided opinions, and philanthropic spirit. At their table, she met journalists, reformers, travelers, people with ideas, sometimes people with one idea, and that a red-hot enthusiasm. She listened with keen interest to their lively discussions on politics, reforms, speeches, books. Both Mr. and Mrs. Leighton were working to relieve the sin and misery of their fellow-creatures. The husband put

his faith mainly in general movements and measures of justice and humanity. The wife, while she shared his desire for these, felt deeply that the world has to be saved man by man.

To a thoughtful young soul, the first contact with city life is far from being all pleasure. The mad scramble for money and place—the fiendish subtleties of temptation—the crowds of children born to an inheritance of vice—wretchedness and luxury, mocking each other to the face;—these things oppressed the happy young heart like a nightmare. Bright and hopeful as her spirit was, Theodora was sometimes weighed down with this feeling. The world seemed so hopelessly big and wicked!

Most of the people she met at the Waltons' seemed to get along with these disagreeable facts by ignoring them as none of their business; but that seemed the saddest of all.

She liked better to hear the Leightons and their visitors, even though the talk brought to light suffering that made her heart-sick. At least they were in earnest, trying to right the wrongs in one way and another. One day at dinner, she had been listening to an eloquent talker who painted the corruption in high places and brutality in low, in such startling colors that it seemed as if nothing short of another flood could wash the old earth clean. She went upstairs with her hostess, quite despairing. As they entered the drawing-room, she noticed a lady waiting, in the bay-window. She sat with downcast eyes, apparently lost in her own thoughts, so that she did not notice the slight rustle of their coming in. While Mrs. Leighton went on, with a pleased look, to speak with her, Theodora caught one of those "instantaneous views" which never fade from

memory:—a *petite* person, dressed in black, a mass of dark, wavy hair about a small, colorless face; all the features, except the full lips, infantine in their delicacy; long lashes which shadow the pale cheek; an expression of intense seriousness, almost melancholy.

Mrs. Leighton stood beside her before her reverie was broken; then, as if her consciousness came slowly out to meet external things, she raised her eyes, thoughtful, hazel eyes, so near-sighted that it was a moment, even then, before she recognized her friend.. Then a beautiful light dawned in her eyes and a faint color stole into her cheeks as she held out both hands to meet Mrs. Leighton's warm greeting.

"I have come to see you about my old man," she said, and went on to tell a touching, yet humorous story, about some forlorn old fellow who had been living under a few boards knocked together for a shanty on a vacant lot, and had just been routed by the police. Her voice was as unique as her face. Its modulations varied little from a monotone, and yet there was a silvery sweetness in its flow, an under-current of fervor in its softness, which made it as fascinating as her moonlight face. Theodora stood by the table, turning the leaves of a book, too much captivated by the stranger to go away. Presently Mrs. Leighton called her to them, and introduced her. They were devising some way of relief for the old man, and finally Mrs. Leighton said:

"Now, Miss Sara, I should like to go with you and put this in effect, but I have another engagement. I propose you take this girl along. She can help you, and it will do her good."

The girl went gladly, and this was the first of many expeditions in which she saw much and helped a little.

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She concluded there was a way of purifying the w much more hopeful than a deluge.

She found the new object of her admiration v lady of refinement, who had devoted herself to the of a Bible-reader among the poor. Theodora's ad tion grew to reverence as she saw how thoroughly understood their life, how she comforted the sick; she counseled half-distracted mothers; how her l friends relied upon her judgment and trusted in her t how she turned her unflinching conscience on their as on her own; and yet they accepted its chiding be its voice was love; how the riches of her Bible kn edge put unbelief to shame; how she held young dren spell-bound with the sweet story of old; how intrepid little creature, strong in faith, went into h where few gentlemen would venture without an e of police, winning her way like a moonbeam or a ern wind. For the sake of breaking down all ba between herself and her people, she had planted he for the present, in their midst.

The first time Theodora followed her up the d stairs of the tenement-house, to her bare, comfo room, the tears sprang to her eyes, and she turned t appealingly.

"This has been a palace where I have seen the in His beauty!" answered Miss Sara, with a hea smile.

We pass through many unconscious crises in our Neither of the three was distinctly aware of it, bu presence of this stranger in their house stayed a cu which had begun to drift Mr. and Mrs. Jack W apart.

There are women who are blessed with the gift of making life run smoothly. They have the intuition to speak the one word that will straighten out a misunderstanding —to keep silence when ruffled feelings need only to be let alone—to sprinkle a little balm on self-respect when it has been mortified—to look comprehension when one is unappreciated. They are thinking of others rather than themselves.

Other women there are who possess the gift of friction. As if by instinct, they throw in the one word that will irritate—they are sure to take things a little differently from the way they were meant—their vanity exposes a surface to be wounded wherever you touch.

From a two-years' pull with a yoke-fellow of the last description, Mr. Walton was somewhat tired. A slight but constant galling was likely to make either a sore or a callous place in his heart. He was affectionate and unselfish—just the man to delight in home. The small, continual jar in his domestic happiness irked him miserably, but he had not the least diplomacy to prevent it.

If it had ever occurred to Mrs. Walton that the fine gold of her husband's love was becoming somewhat dimmed, she would have blamed no one but him. It was her way not to find fault with herself for being irritated, but with him for irritating her. She felt about marriage as some people do about conversion—the matter was settled once for all, and there was nothing further to gain or lose.

In the early part of their married life, he had been constantly trying to surprise her with something that would give her pleasure; but she so often received his presents with a "Why, Jack, what do you suppose I want of this?" or, "I do wish, Mr. Walton, you would

let me select my own dresses!" that he had ne
ceased giving her anything but money. She knew v
she wanted, and if he would only let her have money
freedom, could suit herself. That love could throw v
into a gift, or a project, which they did not posses
themselves, seemed never to enter her mind. She
pride in saying there was no romance about her.
husband's daily life, and hers as well, would have l
much happier if there had been some.

That Winter, there was felt in the house an eler
of cheerful, every-day patience, of gentle, womanly
which had been wanting there. Without caring to
the reason, Mr. Walton felt that his home was hap
That gave him more forbearance for his wife's fr
moods, and she, in consequence, fretted less.

IX.

BEN WALTON.

"DO I hold the boat steady enough?"

"Almost. If you can keep it straight with that white birch for about five minutes, I will be done. Does it tire you?"

"Oh, no; I had grown quite proud of my skill in making 'The Swan' cut the water. Now I like to see if I can keep her still, as well."

For a few minutes the girl who held the oars was quietly intent, with her eyes directed to the "Lady of the Forest," which gleamed out from the green of the cedars—lightly dipping the blades just enough to keep the boat from swaying to a lazy eddy in the lake.

The young man seated in the stern was rapidly drawing, often glancing up, then back to the sketch-book on his knee.

"There!" he said, at last, holding it up, and looking at it with a pleased smile. "I won't trouble you to keep so still any longer."

"Just as if it were any effort for me to keep still! But I am to be paid with the picture, you know. So hand it over, please."

"I couldn't possibly let you have this picture, Miss Theo.," he said, still gazing at it with a dreamy expression of deep content.

"But that's not fair. I held the boat still for you to sketch Whiteface. You needn't say the sketch isn't

pretty enough, for you look amazingly pleased with yourself."

"I am. It is not pretty enough for the original, b it is far too pretty for me to part with."

"What a selfish speech!" she said, as she laid the oa in rest and held out her hands for the book, which l passed her. When she looked at it, she bent her he till her broad-rimmed hat shaded her eyes from t draughtsman. Instead of the scene she expected, s found on the page a maiden in a little boat, oars light poised in her hands, sprays of partridge-vine traili from her hat to her shoulder, her happy eyes looking in the distance, her mouth just ready to smile. It was

> "A face in which did meet
> Sweet records, promises as sweet."

"You fraud!" she exclaimed, throwing off her co fusion with a laugh. "You have made all that glorio range of mountains nothing but a background for t girl!"

"Exactly!" answered the young gentleman, with a st ficiently expressive gaze at her. "I must draw things *I see* them, you know."

The point was so suddenly turned that she had no a swer ready. She handed back the sketch-book, and se ing the oars, sent the little boat shooting far out into t lake. Vigorous exercise is death to sentiment. Her c posite neighbor, however, had nothing to do but sit lea ing gracefully with his arm on his knee and admire h heightened color.

"Don't you feel guilty for cheating me so?" she sa at last, with a saucy glance, glancing away no less quic ly when she met the look fixed upon her. "I was

have that sketch for a memento, and now if I have to go away without it, I shall forget all about these rows on the lake and the lovely sunsets with the mountains in front of them."

"So you expect to forget all the good talks we have had, and the songs you have sung me, and the poetry I have read you in this little boat?" he asked, reproachfully.

"Most likely I shall, unless I have the picture of Whiteface to remind me," she answered, with a wilful smile.

"I wish I had as convenient a memory," said the young gentleman, looking with a desperately melancholy expression towards Lakeside Lodge.

"Oh, see!" exclaimed Theodora, quite ready to create a diversion. "The evening star is peeping right through the blush of the sunset!"

Ben Walton turned to the west, without speaking. The evening was rare and lovely. Lake Champlain, with its shores, was one dream of beauty; but he was thinking very little about that. His eyes fell from the shell-like tints of the twilight sky and the magnificence of mountains to the glowing young face before him. The wavy brown hair about it was loosened, the cheeks were flushed, the large blue eyes at their darkest, the lips looked soft and full as she gazed into the beautiful west. Although she seemed lost in admiration, her firm and shapely hands still dipped and feathered the oars with a light and steady motion. He would have given half his fortune to know how that girl felt towards him, and yet he dared not put it to the proof.

When a letter from his brother had come, saying that Miss Cameron was kind enough to take charge of the lit-

tle girls for the Summer at Lakeside Lodge, so that their mother could go to Newport and he could stay in New York, this young gentleman had been rather annoyed. She would expect some attention from him, and it would be a bother. If it had been that other Miss Cameron it would have done very well; she was pretty and graceful.

"Isn't she a charming girl?" his mother had said to him, the day after she came.

"Really, mother, I could not say that," answered Mr. Ben, dusting his shining boots, "but she is immensely improved since she was here last Summer. A year in the city is a great thing for a young lady brought up in the country."

Indifference is the cheapest kind of superiority. Fearless as her spirits usually were, the new-comer felt somewhat daunted, at first, by this young gentleman, who regarded with an indulgent smile things which roused her warmest admiration. She felt that she must be very ignorant to enjoy life so keenly, and be so easily impressed or amused. It was not long, however, before he fell into the habit of loitering beside her as she went up and down the garden paths after breakfast, culling flowers for the house. When they were gathered, and she sat on the steps of the back veranda, with an array of vases and heaps of buds and blossoms on the floor beside her, it was important for him to sit by in a garden chair so that when she had arranged some dainty device with her dexterous fingers, tipping her head this way and that to get the effect, and held it up to ask, "Is it pretty?" he could answer her.

Then it was only polite to ask her to go with him, when he drove into the village for the mail, she was so fond of that ride through the woods.

Somehow, her practice-hours were broken in upon many times a day. Even when she conjured Mr. Ben to keep out of the way, so that she could "shriek" her vocal exercises without fear, he would be coming back for one thing and another.

As the midsummer heat came on, the two found it deliciously cool and otherwise delightful to spend the hours between sunset and dark in a little boat on the lake. Usually Theodora rowed, as she was found of the exercise and her companion was not. He liked better to sit, with a lazy grace, in the stern and watch her while they talked. Often she let the skiff float over the liquid sunset beneath them while she sang, or he repeated some poet's story.

Before the Summer was through, young Walton woke to find that a certain presence had enchanted the rooms of his old home—the garden—the lake—the fragrant woods, with its atmosphere of subtle sympathy and elastic strength. He began to look back with superior scorn on all the "boyish fancies" he had entertained before, and say to himself with a certain exultation, "This is love in earnest!" To feel a grand passion was part of being a full-grown man, and Twenty-two wishes to lack nothing which manhood experiences. Besides, Ben Walton was something of a poet in his way, and a poet's education is incomplete till he has been really in love. He had plenty of leisure to cultivate the tender passion, for he had not yet set himself at any particular work in life.

Ben Walton's first year in college had been the wretched existence of a petted mother-boy, whom the paternal sophomores felt it their special duty to toughen. By the second year, he was ready to prove himself initiated in the ways of the world to such an extent that the faculty sent him home for *six weeks of* reflection. The third year he

came under the power of a great revival of religion in college, and shone brightly, for a while, as a convert. Though his zeal subsided with the excitement, he led a more conscientious life thereafter. The fourth year, he was adopted into a coterie of students, most of them city bred and wealthy, who devoted themselves to belles-letters and the social graces, to the contempt of the regular course. The professors insisted that more work should be done. Young Walton thought he could direct his studies more satisfactorily than they could. His health was not perfect—thanks to his sophomore excesses—and he left college without graduating. It seemed to him and his friends that some brilliant destiny must be reserved for him, but exactly what, was not yet revealed.

He wrote with grace, if not originality, and some of his poetical scraps had found favor with first-class magazines. He rather thought journalism might be his calling. He had also a gift with the pencil, and was fond of haunting studios when in the city. He sometimes suspected that only cultivation was needed to unfold in him a genius for art. He heard no distinct vocation towards either of the professions. Business he thought sordid. He said to himself there was no hurry about deciding the matter. He was not obliged to make money. There was no reason he should not pursue his own culture in any way he pleased. He liked this life, which left him free to gratify his tastes.

Unfortunately, his father differed from him; as fathers sometimes will from the most enlightened young men.

Mr. Walton had that almost superstitious respect for literary acquirements which often marks men who have been obliged to make their way without them. He stood a little in awe of this boy, who tossed off so lightly his

judgments upon subjects which he himself knew nothing about. Still, to go on cultivating oneself without any definite aim, looked to him like unproductive consumption. If knowledge was power, he argued that an educated man ought to put his shoulder to the wheel and give the stronger life. Waltonville in general, held the same ideas. Finally, as a concession to these disagreeably practical views, Mr. Ben had entered his name in a physician's office in Burlington, and occasionally read a chapter in Anatomy. But he did it with distaste. His life was growing flat, stale, and unprofitable, when Theodora Cameron broke in upon it like a strain of music upon the rattle of wheels in a street.

X.

SHALL SHE RECANT?

THINGS had come to a crisis. For the first time our young lady had been told that the whole happiness of a man's life was hers to make perfect or to kill. Being inexperienced, she believed it.

It was near midnight now, but she was sitting at the open window of her room. The Lake twinkled in the moonlight. The sweetness of heliotrope and mignonette came up from the garden. No association is so subtle as that of perfume. It brought back every look and tone and emotion of that talk, the evening before, when they were resting on a garden-seat, coming up from the boat-house.

He had pleaded for her love as for his life. She felt, again, the chill of agitation that had shaken her as he began. She wondered at herself, to remember how every drop of feeling for him had ebbed out of her heart as he went on. All but pity. She had never liked him so little. The delicious curiosity, "How much does he care for me?" which makes half the charm of incipient courtship, had held her up to that moment. When she saw that she was all the world to him, she seemed to care nothing more about him. Was not that cruel and heartless? She did not like it in herself. Besides, it had been lonesome to-day. Having love so near, roused her whole nature to long for it. A real grief became him. He was bearing it well, and he had never appeared so manly

in her eyes. She had never liked him so well as the day after she had rejected him. No very rare experience.

A hesitating tap at her door broke in upon her troubled thoughts. She opened it and saw Mrs. Walton, who had bid her good-night three hours before. She had thrown a wrapper over her night-dress, and carried in her hand a small silver candlestick which always stood on the commode by her bedside. By the faint light of the candle, Theodora thought her lovely face looked paler and older than she had ever seen it before. With a trembling heart, she drew forward a rocking-chair for her and seated herself at her feet. Did she know about it then? Why need he tell her! "For the same reason as I should tell my mother if I had her here," she said to herself; and still she felt dissatisfied as if it was a man's part to keep his troubles to himself.

"I could not sleep and I thought perhaps I might find you awake." There was a slight embarrassment in her manner which the girl could not bear to see. She felt ashamed that she should disturb the gentle queenliness of this woman, whom she loved and admired so much.

"I do not know what my son would say if he knew of my coming here; but I cannot see him suffer and do nothing. I suppose he would not have told his mother, but he can keep nothing from me. I know him too well."

Theodora did not know how to speak. She slipped her hand into that soft, white, wrinkled hand which wore the wedding ring, and said softly:

"Can you forgive me, Mrs. Walton?"

"I cannot think you quite know your own heart, my dear," said the mother, clasping her hand, kindly. "You seemed happy with us, this Summer?"

"Indeed I have been very happy!" she answered, looking up gratefully.

"Why shouldn't you be for a longer time—for always?"

How could she talk about it with his mother!

"I don't feel towards him as he says he does towards me," she answered, with her head bent low, trying to take the offence from the words by the gentleness of the tone.

"Very likely; but that is no sign you never will. I have been telling him he ought not to have pressed you for an immediate answer. He must give you time."

Theodora did not believe time would make any difference, but she could not say so to her. After all, how did she know? Had not her heart relented, as she had been sitting there, in the moonlight, living over all the delightful days of their acquaintance; above all, this last day, when the dignity of a self-contained sorrow had touched her with a new respect for him? It would be so sweet to love, if one only could!

"Now that you know how his heart is set upon you, it surely cannot be very hard to learn to love him," said the mother with a pale smile, which went to her heart. She could not imagine how any girl could help loving her Ben. "Some mothers dread to have their children married," she went on, for Theodora dared not answer her last remark; "but for my part, I want to see my sons happy. I never cared to have them find a fortune with a wife, but I do want them to have a fortune in a wife.

"I feel, Theo., that you would make my boy just such a mate as he needs."

Theodora hid her face in the mother's lap. Every word of praise from her was precious, she loved and

revered her so much, and this unexpected confidence touched her to the quick.

"You have just the energy and will and practical earnestness to go with his poetical, sensitive temperament," said Mrs. Walton, laying her hand on the head in her lap. "Let me tell him that you will think of it, my dear."

"But, dear Mrs. Walton, if it should end in the same way, that would only make it worse."

"But I cannot think it is to end so. I believe you were made for each other."

"Shouldn't I feel it within me, if it were so?"

"Perhaps not, at first. Love will grow. I have known so many doubtful engagements to end in happy marriages. It isn't necessary to go into any transports. Perhaps you are fonder of him, now, than you are aware of. You have certainly seemed to enjoy his society as well as he yours."

Was that meant for a reproof? It was said so pleasantly, that she could not think so; but it brought back a disagreeable remark of some gossip which Mrs. Rodgers had repeated to her, that "Theodora Cameron either was, or ought to be, engaged to Ben Walton." She resented it at the time; but did his mother think she had cherished his love for her only to crush it? She had never had a thought of responsibility about it. He had always seemed more than equal to taking care of his own heart, and she had not seen it was coming to this.

"You can hardly know how much pain you have given," said Mrs. Walton, very gently, stroking her hair. "Say you will think better of it, and make us all happy."

"Indeed, I would if I could!" the girl answered, with a sob of real distress. "But how can I, if I do not really

love him! It would be wronging him just as much myself."

"Leave it, my child; leave it undecided. You a agitated now." She had fallen to crying, though sh tried hard to control herself. "You do not know you self. There is no need of such haste. You are to b with us two weeks more, anyway, before Florence come to take the children off your hands. Let it be an ope question till then. Let me tell him it shall be."

"But if —"

"Yes, even *if*. He must take the risk of that. If h chooses to do so, you are willing? May I say that yo take back your answer, and give none until you g away?"

She raised her head and wiped her tears, but she fe faint and perplexed. "If you think best," she sai at last. "I don't know what I ought to do."

"I do think best. That's a dear girl," said Mrs. Wa ton, leaning over to kiss her, with a happy look, as if was all settled. "I am sure you won't regret it, and n poor boy will be so thankful."

Theodora smiled slightly in response, but she was n sure she should not regret it. Still, she was used to ma ing people happy, used to being guided by a wiser he than her own, and she hoped she had done right.

"The time may come when you will thank me for p venting you from throwing away such a —" "chance would have been the vulgar word; but Mrs. Walton c not finish the sentence. The next thing she said w more fortunate. As she rose to go, she stood for a n ment smoothing away the expression of hurt pride h last words had called up by fondling the young girl. S had a great charm for Theodora, and she knew it. S

drew her into her arms, and said: "I have sometimes told you, dear, how I longed for a daughter. I could love this dear child to my heart's content, if she should be mine."

"Oh, Mrs. Walton, I love *you* with all my heart!" she answered, throwing her arms around her neck, and kissing her ardently.

"Now go to sleep," said the lady, with a good-night kiss, taking up the little silver candlestick again. "You will find, one of these days, it is somebody else you love with *all* your heart—not the old mother."

She smiled and nodded cheerfully as she drew the door quietly together, and then Theodora heard her garments trailing softly along the hall to the door of her son's room. So, she had gone to tell him before she slept!

She hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry. That day had taught her that she cared quite too much for Ben Walton to give him up without pain. Then there was so much to give up beside his proper self! A paradise of a home—an independent fortune—that mother, her ideal lady—that brother, who had been so generous to her. She would have scorned the baseness of selling herself to a man she did not love; but all these things made it desirable to love him. Perhaps she expected too much of herself. The Summer had overflowed with pleasure. Could she analyze it, and trace it to its separate sources? One thing was certain—he was associated with it all. To see those nonchalant airs melt away on the side towards her, till it was visibly in her power to make him happy or miserable by a word, had been, to say the least, interesting. To believe, as he assured her, that his destiny and all his hopes lay in her hands, made her heart tremble. She could not bear to sever his life

from hers forever. Did she love him, then? Mrs. Walton said that love would grow.

When she closed her eyes, at last, to sleep, it was with a satisfied feeling that perhaps all her happy days in that delightful home were not over, after all.

XI.

A DECISION.

THEODORA dreaded to meet the family next morning. She had put herself in an embarrassing position. But she found the breakfast-room full of the fragrance of the honeysuckles which were looking in the windows, the table glittering with silver and glass, Mrs. Walton as easy in her graceful sociability as if nothing had happened, and Mr. Walton—who had no idea that anything had happened—ready with his patronizing little joke, as usual. An exquisite morsel of a bouquet beside her plate was the only reminder of her recantation. She dared not meet the eyes of her opposite neighbor, and felt her cheeks flush crimson when Adèle broke out:

"Seems to me Uncle Ben is wonderfully smart this morning! He doesn't generally get to breakfast till we are half through, and this morning he was out in the garden before the bell rang."

"Mother, do make that child keep still, and eat her breakfast! She is getting to be an intolerable chatter-box," remarked Mr. Ben, with disgust.

"Don't you hear wheels on the drive?" asked Theodora, glad of a diversion.

The next moment the door of the room was thrown open, and a young lady ushered herself in with the air of one giving a delightful surprise. She was tall and dark—with broad shoulders, and an amazingly slender

waist. Her dress was marked by the newest oddities of fashion.

"Flora Van Ritter!" exclaimed Mrs. Walton, setting down the coffee-cup she had raised half-way to her lips. "Where did you come from?"

"Came from the historic shores of Plattsburg, to be sure! Didn't you notice the boat gave an uncommonly loud whistle this morning? That was because *I* was aboard. Haven't I been through fire and flood to reach you at this hour of the day? Don't rise! Don't let me be the slip 'twixt the cup and the lip. Just give me a kiss. There, now finish your coffee. How are you, Mr. Walton? I declare, you look younger every time I come. Good-morning, Ben. Bless me! How pale and intellectual-looking you are growing! Writing an epic? You must know, Mrs. Walton, I was going to see you, and then I had business. Imagine it!" spreading out her hands, and rolling up her eyes, "I have come on business. You have not the remotest idea of the dire tribulations the Van Ritter family have passed through. 'Fox's Book of Martyrs' would give you only a shadow, a shade, a faint intimation of it."

"Do strengthen yourself with a muffin and a cup of coffee before you unfold your tale," said Mrs. Walton, who had another plate laid.

"Miss Van Ritter, Miss Cameron." It was the first time the new-comer had paused long enough to allow an introduction.

She bowed low, ejaculating "Miss Cameron;" then sank into the chair next Mr. Ben.

"I am tired to death—just at the last gasp!" she exclaimed, but she revived sufficiently to give, between sips of coffee, a melo-dramatic description of family trials in the way of servants.

"And now, mamma has sent me to you. She says you always have a retinue of people to provide for;

> " ' Some in rags and some in tags,
> And some in velvet gowns.'

Don't you know some young lady of an angelic turn of mind who could be persuaded to take up her abode in our kitchen—for a consideration? Produce the young female, and all the Van Ritters, in succession, will go down on their knees before her, if necessary to soften her obdurate heart, and persuade her to come. I don't know as mamma had intended to give her the *very* best sleeping room, but there's no knowing what she might come to. I dare say, papa will be happy to put the carriage at her service whenever she wishes to attend the Holy Catholic Church. She can have eight evenings of the week out, and hold a soiree in our kitchen the rest of the nights."

After considerable canvassing, the desired damsel was found, and forwarded to Plattsburg, Miss Van Ritter being easily persuaded to stay a week or two at Lakeside Lodge.

Young Walton shrugged his shoulders ungraciously on hearing this, but remarked that she was a stylish girl and treated her very politely.

Theodora, though she did not like her very well, was heartily glad of her coming. It prevented *tête-a-têtes* which would have been awkward, in the circumstances. She soon observed that the voluble young lady was not simply herself — she was Judge Van Ritter's daughter, and was treated with the consideration due to her family.

One day while she was giving Adèle a music-lesson, Mrs. Walton and Miss Van Ritter were sitting in the room.

"Let me send over for Mr. Raymond to join in your picnic, Wednesday," said the hostess, who was always thinking of pleasant things to do for her young people.

"Alas, Mrs. Walton, Mr. Raymond is a thing of the past!"

"Is it so? I really thought that would prove a match."

"Of all sad words—etc.!"

"No. There was an awful impecuniosity in the case, Mrs. Walton. That was all the trouble. Raymond is a splendid fellow. I have no idea I shall ever like anybody else as well. But what could I do? I wasn't going to make a fool of myself by marrying a man that couldn't support me. He was sure he should make his fortune in time, and begged me to wait and see—but bless you! I should be in the sere and yellow leaf before that. He is just a young lawyer without a cent to bless himself with, except what he makes himself."

"Is he promising?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. Father thinks he is rather remarkable. But then, there are so many lawyers, it takes for ever to get started. Ah, well," exclaimed Miss Flora with a yawn; "it is a shockingly mixed-up world. What a pity that nice people can't have the nice things!"

"And Mr. Raymond *was* nice, I thought, when I met him at your house. I fancied you thought so, too."

"Indeed, I did — and he knows it, too. I told him once I would marry him in a minute, if he only had money enough. But he has been rather hateful since it was over. He takes such pains not to meet me. I think that is rather ungentlemanly, when he knows I like him so well, too. He ought not to have expected I would be silly enough to think I could live on love and moonshine."

Adèle was blundering, and the music-teacher's attention was demanded, but she had taken up warmly for the unknown Raymond. The next remark she noticed was: "No, Mrs. Walton, when you hear I am a Mrs. you may know I married for money."

"Oh, no, my dear; I do not believe you would quite do that."

"I wouldn't marry anyone I did not respect and like, of course; but it must be somebody who can give me the comforts of life. Love in a cottage is all very fine in a story or a song, but for practical use, give me less love and more house."

Theodora fervently hoped some rich blue-beard would marry her and bring her to repentance, while the young lawyer should rise in fame and fortune. She had often heard of young hearts crossed by the prudent foresight of parents, but a girl of twenty deliberately announcing herself in the market to be bought for money was a repulsive novelty to her. She was glad to notice that Miss Van Ritter seemed moody and out of spirits all the morning. She had enough heart, at least, to be made a little uncomfortable by giving up the man she would marry in a minute if he had only plenty of money.

"The worldly, mercenary girl!" thought Theodora. Suddenly her conscience turned upon her:—'Are you so very sure that you have nothing in common with her?' —'I would never give up the man I loved because he had his own way to make—never!' 'But wouldn't you give up Ben Walton, if there was nothing but his very self?' 'No!' she made indignant answer to her conscience, 'it is because I like his very self so much that I hesitate.' Still Conscience has an unpleasant way of fixing its *eyes upon us, even* after we have silenced it.

She was glad to get quite away from Lakeside Lodge and all the family that afternoon to make a parting visit to old Mrs. Rodgers, Robert's friend. She was one of those accommodating talkers who only need to be wound up occasionally, like a music-box, to go on and on, quite satisfied with a laugh, a Yes, or a No, from the other side. The little old lady had no idea how much was going on behind the face turned towards her so attentively. The fortnight of suspense was almost at its end. Among many gay and pleasant hours, it had seen the most wretched also which this girl had ever known. The miserable perplexity of not knowing her own mind had harrassed and humiliated her. It was unexpected. She had always fancied that if she ever met the "man of men" for her, she should know him at sight. But here she had been for a whole fortnight unable to get her own heart's consent to say either Yea or Nay to young Walton.

His mother said no one was perfect—a romantic young girl was apt to expect too much at first. She did not want anybody perfect; she did want somebody she could love as much as it was in her to love. Perhaps she was unreasonable. She wanted to feel all the rapture of love which poetry and romance and her own nature had promised her as one of the chief joys of life. But Mrs. Walton said it was "not necessary to feel any transports."

It was only needful to worry her heart down from these extravagant demands, in order to be happy in this lover and all he could give her. If he did not quite satisfy her, could she not make it up with laces and silks, and pictures, and travel, and horses, and ground? She could not but see that she had great power over him.

Perhaps he might become all that she could ask. She could not think of disappointing him without keen pain.

"In the cool of the day" she said good-bye to the kind-hearted Mrs. Rodgers, whose jokes about Walton stung her intolerably in her perplexity. She was thankful to have the long, quiet walk through the woods alone, and said to herself the thing should be decided before she reached home. So it was.

As she passed along the village street, she exchanged cordial greetings with neighbors sitting in their doors for a chat after the warm day's work. She always liked to catch the Rembrandt picture through the doors of the blacksmith's shop, which stood as outpost to the village. Once beyond that, the road hid itself between the trees, so that not a house could be seen. A broad brook came dashing out of the woods on its way to the Lake, and was spanned by a rude bridge, well flanked by willows. She stood, leaning on the side of the bridge, watching the amber water dash itself to crystals against the great stones, and thinking how much had come into her life since she first stood there with Robert, a year before. Then Lakeside Lodge, yonder, had seemed like an enchanted castle, where everything was beautiful, and the happy inmates had whatever they wanted. Suddenly, a step on the bridge broke in upon her sweet and bitter fancies. She did not look up, for she knew well enough who it was, and her heart quailed at the thought of that long walk home. Yet she liked it, that he had come for her. She knew the hand that rested on the rail of the bridge beside hers. She had always thought it too white for a man's. She noticed above the seal-ring, which he always wore, a new gold one, and wished he would not wear it; two rings looked womanish.

"I am afraid there is something of the witch about me," she said; "I find it so hard to cross running water."

"There is something bewitching, at all events. Let me put this where it wants to go—in your hat—may I?"

He had a beautiful cluster of scarlet "bunch-berries," with their cheerful green leaves. She bent her head towards him, and his fingers seemed in no haste to finish their pleasant task.

"Pray, where did you find those?" she asked, meanwhile. "You do not like the same places that bunch-berries do. You like a gravelled path or the grassy roadside—not the rough woods."

He looked annoyed. "Don't *you* like a smooth path better than rocks and brambles?"

"Not always. I like to clamber over the rocks and break my way through the brambles."

There was a jarring consciousness in both that they were speaking in parables. The difference they had expressed was a real and a deep one.

"I came along the good hard path, as became a reasonable man, instead of tearing through the woods. But you lingered so long with the captivating Mrs. Rodgers, that I grew tired of waiting. The walk home I had counted upon as the only good chance to see you away from the ubiquitous Miss Van Ritter. So I strayed into the woods a little way, and came across these pretty corals. They are very becoming, I assure you!"

"You see, I loitered to say good-bye to the brook, as well as the widow."

"Not a long good-bye! We shall come here together many a time, I hope."

His cheek flushed. She saw him turn that ring on his little finger. A large, beautiful pearl was the real back of it. He drew it quickly off, saying, in the voice of one who has waited as long as he can bear:

"Theo.! Let me out of this purgatory of waiting! Give me leave to put this on your finger."

He took her hand gently, asking leave with his eyes yet more earnestly than with his voice.

"No, my friend," she said softly, drawing away her hand. "It can never be."

Her face grew pale and her heart beat hard as she said it. Clanging blows rang from the blacksmith's shop beyond the trees. A swallow whirred out from the willows and skimmed the water.

"*Never!* You do not mean *that?* This is not absolute—final?" he said, looking at her like one who hears his sentence and cannot believe it.

"Final and absolute!" she answered, sadly, with a world of kind regret, but not a gleam of relenting in her eyes.

He snapped the beautiful ring into the brook.

She smiled forlornly, somewhere in her mind thinking he would be sorry for that the next time the village urchins went in wading.

She turned from the side of the bridge, and he walked beside her as one walks in a dream. It was a return very different from this that he had pictured to himself as he waited for her.

That night, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Walton came home. The lady had received much attention at Newport, and was in a complacent mood toward everybody. She petted the children, and praised Theodora for their improvement.

Mr. Walton was happy as a boy let loose from school, and seemed to take peculiar delight in teasing his brother. Theodora had to use all her tact to defend him from jokes about her which were unwittingly savage.

The children were wild with joy. Mr. Walton, the father, was pleased to have his family all about him, and the house was full of cheerful stir. Theodora was to leave the next day. She hoped Mrs. Walton would not know her decision till she was gone, but, looking up suddenly, she caught a grieved glance resting upon her which convinced her those quick motherly eyes had penetrated the secret. The look went through her with a pang. It is hard for a mother to forgive a girl who refuses the heart she counts more precious than worlds. What would Mr. Jack think when he knew she had repaid his generous kindness by giving his brother so much trouble?

It seemed the only natural thing for Ben to take her to the railroad station the next morning, and she proposed the children should go too, much to their delight. They had no idea how useful they were.

The young man tried bravely to put on his old air of indifference, and to do the last little acts of service for her, as if he had never craved the life-long care of her. Possibly some keen observer in the train might have guessed from the two pale faces and the silent hand-clasp of good-bye that a history lay behind.

And so it was all over. Was it? No. When two souls come so near together as theirs had done, it is never all over. They may drift out of sight of each other; the last gleam of love may die away; they may even cease to think of one another; but it is not all over. Whatever passed from the one spirit into the other, in that brief contact, must abide. Truth wrought into the soul by

suffering is a part of it thenceforth. Strength won by self-conquest outlasts the strain and soreness of the struggle. Sorrow had closed the door on their long bright Summer, and neither of them knew that she had left them choicer gifts than joy would have brought.

Hitherto, young Walton had played with life. Now love had wakened his soul to feel its realities. All the manhood in him was roused by the bitter tonic of pain. To find himself incapable of satisfying the girl of his choice, sobered and humbled him. He had been too sincerely in love to lay it all to bad taste that she had refused him. To himself and—what was harder—to his sympathetic mother, he justified her. She had not meant to wound him. She would have loved him if she could.

The earnestness of the nature which had taken such hold on his, made vapid the *dilletante* pursuits which had been his pride. He began to look up to the rustics around him who were doing some solid work in the world, instead of looking down upon them. From dreams of what he might do if he should try, he came down to the less complacent level of trying to do something. His irresolute, self-indulgent nature, was nerved and steadied by the constant test—"What would she say?" He chose the most hopeful among his gifts, and set to work with it. After six months of faithful study and effort, he gave up, with a smile of self-scorn, all hopes of becoming a great painter, quite content to become a successful designer of engravings.

Four years after, Theodora happened to be looking over an illustrated magazine with Flora Van Ritter.

"That is a pretty picture," said Miss Flora, "but what is the sense of its name—'The awakening'?" It was a rustic bridge over a foaming stream bordered by willows.

A young man and maiden stood on the bridge, and he seemed trying to put a ring on her finger, which she seemed to refuse. They looked for the designer's name, but it was omitted.

As for Theodora, she had found out through this passage of experience how little, after all, she cared for all the elegancies and outside advantages of life, compared with the one grand simple pleasure of living with one whose character she could wholly reverence and love. Among the bewildering voices in her heart, she had listened in the final moment to that which called for perfect truth. To give herself away with anything less than her whole heart would have been a treachery; it would have planted an insincerity at the centre and transposed her whole life to a lower key. To bind herself to another unless it was a deep, unquestioned joy to do it, would have been, for her, a lie. To a less ardent, worshipful nature the sort of feeling she had for Walton might have been enough; but when her soul caught sight of the jeweled fetter, it recoiled and protested that was never meant to be its strongest passion. It was Love, more than the lover, that had fascinated her.

That "No" of Theodora's was an oath of fidelity to her highest ideals. It pledged her to truth. That great love she had been roused to hunger for, might never be given to her heart; it should never be mocked, at least, with any tantalizing counterfeits. It should have "the whole loaf or no bread."

Nothing teaches a young soul to stand alone like being forced to decide a great life-question for itself—something where no one can advise because the premises for judgment lie within itself. Theodora Cameron felt,

when she returned to her father's house, that the girl had come back a woman. There is but one Friend who can know the whole, and the future with the present. In Him she had confided as never before, and out of that confiding had grown a new faith and love.

XII.

A CHANGE OF SCENE.

THEODORA CAMERON is kneeling before an open window, with her chin in her hands, her elbows on the window-sill, looking down on the Ohio River. Right opposite lies Zane's Island, long and low, dotted with houses and lines of sentinel poplars. Beyond the island, rise the green Ohio hills, not bold and rugged like those she sees from her chamber window at home, but holding fruitful fields to the sun on their smoothly turned shoulders. His work for the day is done, and he is pouring a flood of rosy haze down the valley between them, as he goes to his rest. It tinges our Theodora's happy face with its glow. A little to the south, a graceful suspension bridge knits the island to the Virginia shore; its towers of dark sandstone look like triumphal arches, and the network of cables, which holds its thousand feet of length in air, seems thrown over them for the beauty of their curves.

Beyond the bridge, she sees the river flowing down, past the smoky city on the hither shore, past the island, between jutting hills, till it loses itself in the misty distance. Around yonder point comes a white steamboat, with her long black smoke-plume floating from her head; here lies a coal-barge, and there two canoe-like skiffs are trying their speed; like a stranger to them all, a little sail-boat, with two passengers, is skimming along, its canvas touched with the rose-color of sunset.

But what is Theodora doing in this Virginia city?

We must go back a little. About once in five years there was high rejoicing in the Rockbridge Parsonage over a visit from "Uncle Graham and Aunt Margaret" —known to the world as Mr. and Mrs. Graham Bradley. Margaret was Mr. Cameron's sister, who had married a gentleman many years her senior, and had gone to live near Wheeling, Virginia, which seemed further off from the homestead then than California now.

Separation did not chill the love of brother and sister, and their children early learned to share it.

It is a curious thing about growing up, to see which of childhood's admirations will stand the test of maturer judgment. It is forlorn to meet, in later years, the hero of your boyhood and find him a coarse, good-natured braggart, or to discover that the lady whom you used to venerate like a fairy god-mother, is only a fussy woman with sugar-plums in her pocket. On the other hand, how delightful it is to admire our early favorites the more, the more sense we have to appreciate them! This happiness, Donald, Theodora, and Faith were enjoying, in a visit from "Uncle Graham and Aunt Margaret," the latter part of the Summer which brought Theodora home from Waltonville. Of the other children, Miriam was too old and Jessie too young, to feel it so strongly. Robert was away.

"One of nature's noblemen!" was apt to be the finishing phrase, when people tried to describe Mr. Bradley.

A stalwart form—a face of homely dignity—a vigorous mind, enriched from observation rather than from books—unbounded generosity—tenderness for the weak and suffering, whether brute or human—self-respect that would

meet a king on the simple ground of manhood—intolerant contempt for meanness and mean men—a rare measure of that chivalrous honesty which best deserves the name of honor; if Nature deems a man mixed of such elements, worthy her accolade, then the title was well bestowed.

He had already rounded out his threescore years and ten,—

> "And that which should accompany old age,
> As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends,"

were his.

The young Camerons puzzled themselves discussing the likeness and unlikeness between their father and his sister.

"After all," said Miriam, "the main difference is, that he is a man and she is a woman. It is just like the difference in their looks—they are both built on a grand plan, but she is fair and he is dark."

"That's true enough," said Donald, "but besides that, she's more jolly and he's more intellectual."

"'*Jolly!*' What a word to apply to either of them!"

"Well, then, you will say it comes nearer applying to her than him."

"Perhaps so; but he has the shrewdest wit," said Miriam, who never yielded a point where her father was concerned.

"I think they are made of the same ingredients, combined in different proportions," announced Faith.

"You talk about them as if they were mince-meat or pound-cake," said Theodora. "I think it is fine to hear them call each other 'John' and 'Margaret,' and talk over old times."

One evening Theodora had been playing and singing for them,

"That reminds me," said Mr. Bradley. "The day before I left Wheeling, my friend Torrington said to me, 'I wish if you are going East, you would find a music-teacher for my children.' He said they had a good deal of taste for music, both the boy and the girl, and his wife was anxious to have them well taught. If they could find a teacher they really liked, they would take her into the family for the sake of having her look after their habits of playing. He said there were quite a number of his friends who wanted better instruction for their children, and if I could find an accomplished teacher, they could make up a fine class for her. Now, why isn't this the very young lady?"

"Do you think I would answer?"

"Why not? You are up to all the modern improvements, are you not? Margaret, you know more about these things than I do—don't you think she would suit them?"

"Yes, I should think so, exactly."

"Let me tell you, uncle; you don't want to recommend your niece without being sure. What if you suggest my name, get him to write to my teachers in New York, and then, if their opinion is satisfactory, ask me to come."

"We will do that without delay, so that we can take you back with us, if all goes well."

"What sort of a family is this? I don't know as we will let you carry her off," said Mr. Cameron.

"Mr. Torrington comes from one of the old F. F. V's. He is a very sensible man; one of our very best lawyers."

"He is an elder in the Presbyterian church," added Mrs. Bradley, "and his children are better drilled in the Assembly's 'Shorter Catechism' than yours are, I'll warrant."

"What sort of a lady is his wife?" asked Mrs. Cameron.

"I am very slightly acquainted with her. I know she is a beautiful singer, and very much of a lady."

"She is a fine-looking woman—a Marion, from South Carolina," added Mr. Bradley, who never felt informed about people till he knew what blood they came of.

"They are not slaveholders, I hope," said Mr. Cameron. "I should not be willing to have one of my children live in a slaveholding family."

"No. There's nothing in their principles to prevent it; but Mr. Torrington knows that such property is an unsafe investment, so near the border. They believe in the patriarchal institution, its indispensableness, and all the rest of it; but I suppose your daughter is so well indoctrinated, you would not be afraid of their perverting her ideas."

"How came you, such a staunch anti-slavery man, to be on such intimate terms with him?"

"Oh, I must needs go out of my world if I made no friends who differed with me on that subject. All these forty years I have lived in Virginia I have had only two or three neighbors who agreed with me in my anti-slavery views."

"I will tell you, John, how Mr. Torrington and my husband came to be great friends, in the first place," said Mrs. Bradley. "It was through a law-suit, where Mr. Torrington was counsel. Mr. Bradley was bondsman for a friend of his—cashier of a savings bank—who proved a defaulter. There was, somehow, a good-sized loop-hole of the law that he might have crept through, and escaped paying several thousand dollars; but he wouldn't do it. He said it was better he should lose it than the poor

people who had trusted their savings in the hands of his friend. Mr. Torrington never forgets that. He says Mr. Bradley is a man after his own heart."

"He can't think any more highly of me than I do of him," said Mr. Bradley. "He is a thoroughbred gentleman. I think it would be a capital place for Theodora."

Everything proved satisfactory. Professor Brunelli praised his pupil in quite as extravagant terms as he had ever scolded her, while Mr. Vanderberg vouched for her in terms she valued yet more. Mr. Torrington's offers were fair—the prospect for a good class flattering.

Theodora was very happy in the plan. She was elated by the thought that she should no longer be drawing on the slender family purse, and there would be all the more for the three children still dependent on it.

The journey was full of pleasure for her. Beyond New York, it was all new. It was one of those times in the year when the American public are flitting and trains are crowded. So it was often impossible for the three to sit together.

"Do take this seat with Aunt Margaret, and let me go and find a place in the next car," said Theodora, who could not bear to have so old a gentleman as her uncle discommoded for her.

"No, indeed, my dear. You must not teach me to forget my gallantry." And he never did forget it. As she traveled with him, and spent weeks in his house, she saw that the politeness towards women which so many men cherish, as Hudibras his wit,

> "As being loth to wear it out,
> And therefore bear it not about,
> Unless on holydays, or so,
> As men their best apparel do,"

he held not too costly to be expended every day on his own wife and daughters.

He managed to get well paid, however, for hunting up a seat with a stranger, and was almost sure to come back with some remarkable fact he had learned. He was one of those people blessed with the faculty of turning up information from the unlikeliest soil. The stupidest person has his own point of view for his dim look-out on the world, and sees something which does not come exactly within the range of his next neighbor; and Mr. Bradley could hardly be set down beside any man without getting out of him this something. Theodora had been remarking on this power of his.

"Give me a coal-heaver or a philosopher," said he; "a pagan, Mohammedan, Jew, or Jesuit—a jail-bird or a saint—and I can enjoy his society and make something out of him. But the most hopeless sort of folks are these regular society people, who are all run in one mould. They have no curiosity to hear anything, for they know it all, and they won't tell anything, unless you put them on the rack, for fear it might be vulgar, I suppose."

The young traveler's eyes sparkled with deep delight as they swept on through an ever-changing magnificence of mountains. She was a true child of the hills, and these were grander ranges than she had ever seen before. The sun had been flashing the rivers and coloring the mountains in royal style, till, late in the afternoon, the skies began to cloud over, as if there was nothing more worth showing. The clouds sulked and lowered, and threatened every moment to burst into tears. Now and then they drizzled just enough to make streaks in the soot on the windows and car-platforms.

Our traveler's spirits sank from their exhilaration. A

kind of grey chill spreading through the murky air made known that the sun was near going down. At the same time she saw in the distance a dense body of smoke, hanging like a dismal doom over some large town, whose dingy chimneys were belching solid columns of yellowish blackness into its gloom. The sulphurous smell of bituminous coal grew more strong and disagreeable. Her aunt, tired with the long day's travel, had fallen into a nap. Her uncle leaned forward from the seat behind, and touched her shoulder.

"Wake up, Margaret; we are almost home. That is our city yonder, Theodora."

"Is that Wheeling?"

She ventured no comment. So she was to enter into that horror of great darkness to spend a year of her life!

"There is our buggy," said Mrs. Bradley to her husband, as the train stopped, "and our express wagon. Can you see who has come for us?"

"Old Jake—there he is."

Theodora saw an oldish man, loosely put together, shambling along towards them, with a broad grin on his face.

"Glad to see you, Jake," said her uncle, shaking hands with him. "How are they all at home?"

"They're all right. Will, he 'lowed to come after ye himself, but they'd cut right smart o' hay, and they wanted to get it in 'gain' it rained. So they sent me. 'Spect they thought I wa'n't much 'count to home. Job he was goin' out to 'Hio, so he drove in the 'spress."

"Why, uncle, do you do your haying in September?" asked Theodora, as they walked towards the vehicle.

"Second crop. Now you are to go in the buggy with your Aunt Margaret, and I will ride with Jake and the

baggage in the express wagon; but if it is pretty dark when you get to the foot of the hill, and your aunt feels timid about driving up, we will exchange."

"Exchange now, uncle; let me ride in with Jake; you are more tired than I am."

"Would you fancy riding through town in a baggage wagon?"

"I shouldn't care."

He smiled and said, "If Mr. Torrington should meet his music-teacher driving out in that style, he might be shocked. No; this is the best way. Let me help you in. You two start on and we will overtake you."

Her future abode looked anything but attractive to Theodora as they drove through the streets. The brick walls were dingy; a great bare hill loomed up against the leaden sky in the background. In passing out of the city they had to climb a long ascent; comfortless brown houses were trying to keep a foothold on it. A small boy was amusing himself sifting ashes, which the wind took in their faces. A sow with a litter of pigs, grunting, hurried out of the road.

Once at the top of this hill, Theodora drew a long breath; the town was behind them, and the air a shade less pitchy. Before them, lay a long, winding descent by a broad, hard macadamized turnpike. High to the left were piled horizontal stratas of limestome, with stunted trees grappling their roots about their ragged edges. All along the right, a low, broad stone parapet guarded the traveler from a precipice so abrupt that from the carriage nothing could be seen, short of the creek, and the meadow four hundred feet below.

"This is the scene of McCulloch's famous leap," said Mrs. Bradley.

"I didn't know that McCulloch ever lept, nor that there was any McCulloch," said Theodora; "am I disgracefully ignorant?"

"Well—I won't tell. It is just a local tradition, but it was told me so many times, going past this place, the first years I lived here, that I nearly wished the Indians had made an end of him."

"What was it? Do enlighten me 'before I further run.'"

"McCulloch was one of the boldest of the pioneers that first settled this region, and at one time he was surprised by Indians, just on top of that hill to our left. He saw he was between two parties. It seemed like only a choice between two modes of death, but he preferred to trust himself to the rocks. So he spurred his horse right down the face of this precipice, and never stopped till he had forded the creek down there. The Indians stood stupefied, they say, at such a miracle of daring, and so he escaped."

"I don't see how it could be possible for a horse to make his way down there, let alone the rider."

"I suppose before the road was cut, or any blasting done, there might be a foothold on the roots of trees and the shelves of stone, which we don't see now."

At the foot of the long hill, they passed through a suburb in comparison with which the city above seemed delectable. Liquor shops, meat shops, smithys, and the coal shafts, pouring down their smutty loads from the mines in the hill-side, made its air a nauseous mixture.

Past the toll-gate and into the open country. By degrees, the smoky, sulphur-laden air grew clearer. Still the clouds were heavy, and everything lay in cold shadow.

"What a fine road you have!" said Theodora, glad to find something to praise.

"Yes, it is the National Road which runs from Baltimore to Indianapolis. It was built by the Government and the people together, some forty years ago."

"Who is Old Jake, Aunt Margaret? Isn't it almost time for me to go with him?" The express wagon passed them, and was keeping a little in advance.

"Not for a mile yet. Jake used to have a log-cabin and a little patch of ground just on the edge of our farm. He was always a lazy, good-natured soul—liked to hunt a good deal better than work; but he had a right nice little wife that held things together like, till she died a few years ago, and then he took to drinking, and his son, who was a good deal like him, married a no-account kind of girl with a sharp tongue, and I suppose she made the old man pretty uncomfortable, so that he drank all the worse. He did seem so forlorn and hopeless, that we all pitied him. Mr. Bradley used to encourage him to keep sober, and do something; but Winter before last, when he had him hauling logs, one of them somehow rolled on him and broke his leg. Mr. Bradley took him on the sled and brought him home, for he said he knew his daughter-in-law wouldn't take any proper care of him. It was all Winter before he could get around, and somehow he has been with us ever since. He seemed to hate the thought of going away that badly, we hadn't the heart to turn him off."

"Has he stopped drinking?"

"Pretty nearly. He has been drunk twice in the time, but I am in hopes we'll get him off from it entirely. He took to liquor because he was so comfortless like, and as long as he can stay where he has plenty he likes to eat, and people are kind to him, I think he doesn't crave it so very much. It is a rod over his head that he knows we

can't keep him if he doesn't quit it. He does little things around the house and the stable, and tries to be of some use, though he is right lame and getting old."

Presently the express wagon stopped, and the buggy coming up with it, the new arrangement was made. Then they turned sharply off to the left from the hard, finely graded 'pike on to the country road, narrow and steep and uneven, of soft earth and rolling stones. The twilight was soon almost lost in the shade of forest trees. There was just light enough to show a deep gully here, or a stump crowding close upon the path there.

"You call this safe, do you, Jake?" said Theodora, after riding some time with her eyes pretty wide open.

"Well, yes, ma'am; I never hearn tell of an opset on this road but oncet. Then the horse frightened, up by yon dead tree, and backed off the side. A sharp rail struck him and snagged him so he died. He was an onerey old beast, anyway; never got fairly bridlewise to his dyin' day."

"It's pretty sidling here."

"It's tol'able slippey, is the worst on't. We had right smart o' rain yesterday. Git! Bones, git!"

This timely exhortation, backed by a crack of the whip, brought the horses quickly around the sidling, "slippery" turn, where a steep bank went down from the outward side.

"Is one of the horses named 'Bones'?"

"The girls call him Juba, but I al'ays call him Bones, 'cause he will show his ribs; eats a heap o' feed, too. The nigh horse is a dependable creeter, al'ays 'lows to pull his share."

They passed an open space, where a candle flickered from a log-cabin window, and some turkeys, disturbed on their roost, stirred and gobbled sleepily.

Theodora fell to wondering what sort of a place he uncle's house might be, and whether she should like he cousins and they her.

Old Jake's voice broke into the current of her thoughts saying:

"The girls was redden' up the house extry fine thi mornin'; said they expected you'd be mighty p'tic'lar bein' a Yankee."

So they rather dreaded her! She smiled in the dark at the idea of any lady's being afraid of her Yanke particularity, but it did not make her more comfort able.

"Goin' to stay a good spell?" asked Jake, by way o keeping up conversation.

"I am going into Wheeling to teach music."

"You be? When does your school take up?"

"It isn't a school. Just scholars, one at a time."

"Kind o' slow way, ain't it?"

"It's the way for music."

A miserable, homesick feeling stole over the girl. Th thought of spending a year among strangers, in th murky, evil-smelling town, lay like lead on her spirit The dear group gathered around the table in the brig sitting-room at home rose before her—her father's nob head, and her mother's sweet face, with the lace frills her cap resting above her soft curls—Miriam's gracef form—Faith's black eyes, and Jessie's golden hair—Do ald playing some little practical joke on one or other them; she wished it were she!

A doleful cry came out from the woods on the left.

"What's that?" she said, with a start.

"That's an owl," answered Jake, with a short laug "Sca't, was ye? Don't ye have no owls your way?"

"I never heard one before," she answered.

"I sh'd think that was queer," returned Jake.

Again the mournful "Who! who! *who-o-o!*" sounded out of the darkness.

"If I don't hold on, I shall boo-boo in concert with him," thought Theodora.

"I declare for't. Whoa!" said Jake. "The girls put in a piece for ye, and I never thought on't till this minnut."

"Piece of what?" she wondered; but she had already appeared so green in the eyes of her companion, having never heard an owl, that she thought best to keep still and await developments, while he pawed about under the seat of the wagon.

"What's the matter?" called Mr. Bradley, from the carriage in the rear.

"Nothin' dange-rous," answered Jake, as he drew out a basket and went back to him with it.

Theodora took the reins, which he had twisted around the whip-stock, for, peering down the side of the road, it looked as if one might travel a great ways in a short time if the horses should happen to shy over there. Presently Jake came back, and handed the basket up to her, saying:

"Your orders is to eat what's left."

"What is it?"

"Oh, I dunno. Nothin' very bad to take, I expect."

She had not thought of being hungry; but as she groped about in the basket, and drew out one nice bit after another of broiled chicken and sweet bread and butter, and then a delicious bunch of grapes, she was amused to feel a sensible rise in her courage.

"Won't you have some?" she asked Jake.

"No, thank ye. I eat right smart o' pawpaws a b ago, and I don't care 'bout no more till we're home."

They seemed to have reached a level height, and t wagon trundled along quite fast. As they came arou a bend in the road, the sound of some musical instrume was brought on the wind. At first it seemed sweet, as was unexpected, but as they came near, Theodora thoug it had a hand-organ quality, yet was too irregular f that.

"Your owls don't play 'Pop goes the weasel,' do they she said to Jake. "What is that music coming out of t woods?"

"That must be Bethann's 'cordion. She's a gre player," said Jake, with pride.

"Who is Bethann?"

"She is Joe's wife. They're yer uncle's tenant Lives in the cabin right yere."

He walked his horses slowly past a little log-house, that Theodora had a fine "interior" through the op door.

A coal-oil lamp shed its bright light on a fair you woman, with a mass of brown hair twisted around h head, and a clean print neatly fitted over her we rounded figure, she was drawing the folds of a lar accordion, which rested on her knee. A young man, his shirt-sleeves, sat on a stool opposite, his chin resti on his hand, lost in admiration of her and her music; t nicely-scoured floor, the gay quilt on the plump feath bed, the pitcher of flowers on the bureau, completed pretty picture; and the vines, trained on bent poles o the door, made just the rustic setting for it.

"They've been married only six months," said Ja apologetically.

The cheering notes of "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines" followed our travelers up another rough hill, distance softening their strident tones to sweetness.

"There's our house, yender," said Jake, as they passed over the summit.

She could just discern a gable-end rising from among trees, but a bright light rayed from the windows.

Now a chorus of dogs began to bark, and the horses trotted up to the gate in the midst of a grand demonstration on their part. They raced from the wagon to the buggy, and from the buggy back again, barking as if it was their last chance.

"Hullo!" called Jake, "here we be!"

Then she saw figures moving about in the light within, and voices came to the door. There was a joyful confusion of greetings, and questions which nobody answered, and laughing, and the whinnying of horses and barking of dogs.

"Help out your cousin, Will," called the mother.

Theodora felt herself lifted down and kissed by a stout six-footer, and handed over to a girl taller than herself.

"So this is Theodora; I am so glad you've come!" said she, giving her a cousinly embrace, and leading her into the house.

"And I am glad to get here. Which are you, Kate or Bessie?"

"I am Kate; Bessie, where are you? Come and see Cousin Theodora."

She was putting down an armful of satchels and shawls, and came forward to give a friendly welcome, with a shade of shyness in it. She was a degree below her sister in height, though still taller than their New England

cousin, and a blonde, while Kate was dark. The s
room light, after the darkness, dazzled Theodora's
but it warmed her heart, for she saw in a momen
these new cousins would be friends, and a cousin yc
is such a nice thing to have!

XIII.

ESMADURA.

ABOUT three-quarters of an hour after the sun had risen on the Cameron household, his level beams found out the eyelids of their stray girl. They lifted suddenly, and she looked about to see where she was. A large, pleasant room, with a bright carpet, roses and lilies on the wall-paper, a pretty black walnut chamber-set, the sun streaming over many shades of green boughs in at two windows opposite.

"Aunt Margaret's, to be sure—that's where it is!" The recollection of that smutty, disagreeable town came back, but she sent it away, and said to herself: "This is pleasant, anyhow; and I don't have to go for two weeks."

When she answered to the breakfast-bell, she found the table laid on a porch, enclosed on three sides with a net-work of morning-glories for its outward wall. As the light breeze swayed them, she caught glimpses of a well and a garden beyond, with gladiolus and salvia flaming here and there.

People are to be pitied who enjoy running in only one groove. It was always a pleasure to Theodora to look into a new phase of life. She listened to the table-talk that morning with as keen a relish as she ate her waffles and honey, it was all so new to her:—the interested questions and answers about the wheat and the corn, the cabbages and potatoes, the steers and the colt, the sheep and cows.

The creatures on the place seemed to have as much individuality as so many persons.

When it came to the neighborhood news, she was delighted with the mixture of shrewd sense and kindliness in their comments, dashed now and then with an idiom novel to her. She thought old Jake and the hired man who sat next him atoned for their primitive table manners by the richness of their *patois* when they spoke.

"Going right into it, uncle?" she asked, as she saw him, in his working suit, taking his hat to go out after breakfast.

"Yes, I must go and say 'How are ye?' to my sheep."

"May I go with you?"

"If you want to, yes. I will show you one of the finest flocks this side of the Alleghanies."

He took a small bag of salt in his hand and they went out. They passed through a basin-shaped pasture where horses and cows were grazing. Some of them looked up; one horse whinnied and came trotting towards them.

"Old Moll is glad to see her master back! Mistress Moll Pitcher, this is a Vermont lady come to see you; that's a country where they have fine horses, but I doubt whether they have any better-hearted than you." He stroked and patted her while she laid her head on his shoulder, and showed, by every sign which horses know, her pleasure at seeing him.

"I am glad to see you, Moll Pitcher," said Theodora, in return to the introduction. "I can't say I think you're a beauty, though, unless it is on the principle of 'handsome is that handsome does.'"

"Indeed she's a beauty by that test, for we owe your Aunt Margaret's life to her. When she was coming down Wheeling Hill, one time, the breeching broke and let the

buggy run right against Old Moll, and the faithful creature just looked round to see what was to be done, and stood and held it till Margaret could get out and call help."

"She did! I shall love her for that."

He strewed a little salt on the grass and walked on. Theodora saw that as soon as Moll had eaten it she followed close at his shoulder all across the field.

"Some mercenary souls would say she was after more salt," he said, with a twinkle that often came into his blue eyes; "but I have no question that it is disinterested affection."

He opened a gate and held it for his niece to pass through. The horse seemed to understand she must not go further, but stood looking over it. On the opposite side of this field was a grove of oaks and "sugar trees," and scattered about among them, a large flock of sheep were feeding. At the sound of voices, they raised their heads; for half a minute looked and listened, then they came running, pell-mell, with that thick, soft sound made by the trampling of so many tiny hoofs on the sward.

"Why, they are running right to you, uncle! Sheep always run away from me just so fast."

"Yes, they always do that; didn't you hear a great bleating and running as we came up past the 'spring field' last night?"

"Yes, sir, I noticed it sounded as if they were crowding up to the fence!"

"But you did not understand the reason? They heard my voice as I was riding by."

"And you had been gone six weeks! Why, I didn't suppose there was anything so like the Good Shepherd and his flock in this country; I thought it was only in

the East that they loved their shepherd so as to follow in the dark where they could hear his voice."

"There, again, some ill-natured people might say they were after the loaves and fishes. I hate to disappoint them when they come trooping after me; so I almost always take along a sprinkle of salt when I go into the fields, just as I provide myself with sugar-plums when I go to see my grandchildren."

"Even at that, they are not so very different from people; we are more apt to love a person for being good to us than simply good in himself. How funny they do look! Actually scrambling on one another's backs to get at you and the salt! Let me give them some, may I?"

He poured a little into her hands, which she held out to the woolly creatures; they demurred, but presently ventured, and she laughed to feel their velvety noses rubbing her palms.

"So, ho, Sam Patch! Have you only just now got the news?" She followed his eyes and saw a sheep running out of the woods, leaping over the fallen logs at full speed.

"What is he named Sam Patch for?"

"He is such a jumper. Don't you see how he comes? His mother disowned him when he was a lamb, so we had to bring him up at the house, and the children named him. He clambers about like a mountain goat."

"And so you know him from the rest, because you had him at the house?"

"Know him! Why, my child, I know nearly every one of the flock."

"How is it possible, Uncle Graham! They all look alike to me."

"But to me, their faces are as different as so many people's. It is in things we love and study, that we learn to discriminate; now I could hardly tell the tunes apart that you play on the piano. I just have a general notion that one is lively and another solemn, while you would think there was a world-wide difference. Now we will just take a turn through the sugar camp and come around to another field."

As they walked on, Theodora was charmed with the fine old trees, and the glimpses of verdant hills on every side. Her uncle led her to a high knoll, where she could see a large circuit, and stood enjoying her admiration of the prospect.

"How different your hills are from ours at home, Uncle Graham. These are so softly rounded and so fertile to the very summit; while ours, in Vermont and New Hampshire, break into crags at the top. Ours look as if there must have been wild work when they were made; but there—they look like mighty billows of verdure struck solid without any storm. They lie ridge after ridge, just like billows, don't they?"

"Yes; their lines are broken where a run has worn a ravine or a creek makes a broader valley. I wish our farm lay so that we could see the river. I became so attached to the great St. Lawrence living at Mont Rèal that I never can quite get over missing water from our view."

"I didn't know you ever lived in Montreal."

"Didn't you know I was a jeweler once?"

"A *jeweler!* No, indeed, I can't imagine it. I can fancy you 'hewing out a Colossus, but not carving faces on cherry stones.' To think of your being over a shelf with one of those magnifying glasses stuck in your eye,

putting a hair-spring into a watch!" She glanced over his six feet of height, his broad shoulders, and strong hands in amazement. "Are you quite sure of it, uncle?"

He smiled and said: "There may be a question of identity to you, but not to me."

"But how came you to be a jeweler in Montreal and then a wool-grower in Virginia? Do tell me all about it. You started from a nook in New Hampshire, I know. Begin at the beginning, won't you, please, and tell me the story?"

"Well, the beginning was when my father died, when I was nine years old. My mother was poor, and I was her main dependence. When I was fifteen, I went to the neighboring city to learn the watch-maker's trade. An apprentice was obliged to work so many hours a day, and if he chose to do any more than that, it was set down to his credit. I added an hour a day; so by the time I was twenty my hours had counted up to six months. The other six months that lay between me and twenty-one I bought off; then I went back to my native village and set up for myself. I was very successful, and you may imagine I was glad to be, for I wanted to help my brothers. The oldest I taught my trade, but the two boys younger I was resolved should never feel the want of an education, as I did, and I sent them through college."

"But I don't see when you got your own education,' she said, with a quiet smile.

"It seems odd that people often take me for a liberally educated man. All that I went to school, before I was fifteen, would not amount to more than a year. We lived a long way from the school-house, and my mother needed me all the time. The law allowed apprentices

one month a year of schooling. The first part of the time I was learning my trade I used to get that. That is the amount of my 'education.' Reading and writing and arithmetic were about all. I never studied a page of grammar or geography or history at school."

"I never was so ashamed of myself in my life," said Theodora. "Just look at the matter of geography. I studied geography two years, perhaps, and recited every day at school, but you know ten times as much about it as I do. When we were traveling, you knew all about the rivers and towns and mountains, while I hardly knew whether we came first to the Susquehanna or the Potomac, the Blue Ridge or the Alleghanies."

"A man can't make a practice for years of reading the newspapers, with an atlas at his elbow, using it faithfully, without learning something."

"And then you were all the time putting to shame my history. I was interested in history at school, and thought I studied it well; but when you referred to me for information, passing through Trenton and Baltimore and Washington, and so forth, I never could remember *exactly;* I had a general idea of the historical association, but I noticed if you knew a thing at all, you knew it with precision. To find you have learned so much more out of school than I have in, humbles me uncomfortably."

"I have lived almost four times as long as you, my dear," he said, looking down upon her kindly. "What I know, I have learned as the thirsty drink, and I could not forget it. *Desirer savoir c'est le savoir.*"

"Oh, that brings us back to the story. How came you to be in Montreal? You began business for yourself at twenty, and educated your two brothers—what then?"

"After I had built a house and a shop in the old village,

I heard of a fine opening for the trade in Montreal; so I gave that shop, with its furnishing, to the brother who was with me, and set up business, in partnership with Lancaster, a young friend of mine, in the Canadian city. We were prosperous, making money hand over hand till 1812."

"Eighteen-twelve! Why, uncle, that seems so long ago!"

"Oh, no; not so very long. I was twenty-seven then. I had gone over to England at the beginning of the year to buy cutlery and other goods, and very soon there began to be rumors of war between the two countries. If steam ships had been running then it would have been a great convenience to me! However, I reached home several weeks before war was declared. Montreal was not a pleasant residence for Americans after that. Time and again my hat was knocked off in the street, because I wouldn't join in the cry, 'God save the King!' Finally all aliens were required to take an unqualified oath of allegiance to the British Government, or quit the province."

"It did not take you long to choose, I fancy."

"No; still it cost us several thousand dollars to pull up stakes so suddenly. One little incident I remember, that happened not long before we came away. We saw some of the American troops, surrendered at Queenstown, brought into the city; the poor fellows were in a pitiful state, their feet half-bare and bleeding from marching over the snows. Lancaster and another friend and I had the pleasure of sending them a hundred pairs of shoes, and they were thankful enough for them. Now, Theodora, are you country girl enough to climb this fence? It will shorten our distance considerably."

"Yes, indeed; I like climbing fences."

"Now you are up; be sure your skirts are clear; put your hands on my shoulders, and I will give you a jump."

"Capital! What a delightful escort you are, Uncle Graham! Now you are out of Montreal; how did you get here?"

"Well, Lancaster and I floated around some weeks, before deciding where to settle down. But we met in Washington an old friend of ours, who was all on fire about a new line of business; if we would only go into partnership with him, we could make our fortunes straightway. There was a great interest just then among wool-growers about bringing fine-wooled Merino sheep into the country. They were commanding great prices, and expected to sell again at much greater. Morton's plan was to buy a flock of these sheep from the importer, and take them beyond the Alleghanies, where they had not yet been introduced, and sell at some fabulous profit. We filled out the first part of his programme, but not the last. The rage for fine wool subsided. It settled into a fair business, but was no speculation."

"That was better, I suppose."

"Perhaps; though I have enough confidence in my own sense to think I should have known what to do with a sudden fortune, if it had fallen to me. I have seen a great many ups and downs since then, and I have learned this, at least: to live within my means when I have little money, and spend it generously when I have much."

"So that was the way you came to Esmadura?"

"Not at first. We settled down in Ohio, kept bachelor's hall, and studied sheep. One after the other, my partners preferred to go into other business, though

they are still the dearest friends I have. I thought the hills were healthier for the flock, and so bought this place, which I named Esmadura, for a place in Spain, where these high-bred sheep are native."

They had reached another field, where the lambs were capering about after their peculiarly aimless fashion. Mr. Bradley made his niece examine the wool, and she tried to appreciate and admire as much as she was expected to, as he impressed its rare quality upon her.

"Is it really very much more profitable than the ordinary kind?"

"No; not yet. The wool-buyers are not enlightened enough; but they are coming to it. Your Aunt Margaret wants me to keep the common kind, and so raise twice the weight of wool from the same number; but I can't bring myself to it. I believe in fine breeds, and they will be appreciated in time. Just see what beautiful fibre that is!"

"You make me think of an artist I knew in New York. His wife was complaining to me one day that he never would let a portrait go from his studio till it suited *himself*. So he would work over it for days after the buyer thought it done and wished to take it away. 'He wants to satisfy Art and himself,' she said. 'I don't care anything about Art; I want a house and a carriage.' You make a fine-art of your wool-growing, and you must have a choice article, whether you get the money for it or not."

Sunday was the next day—first in that long and bright procession of Esmadura Sundays which were to hold their way in beauty through the memories of all future years for Theodora.

"How will you go to church?" asked her Aunt Mar-

garet, as they were rising from the breakfast-table. "One goes with me in the carriage, and the rest on horseback."

"I should like of all things to go on horseback, if I only could. I always wanted to ride, but I never had the chance. Do you suppose I could? As long ago as I can remember, I used to play ride, on the saw-horse."

"Oh, yes. You might go on old Moll; she would carry a baby safely. Elfie is a little gay, and Juba frightens sometimes. I wouldn't like you to begin with either of them; but Moll Pitcher is quiet as a sheep. Will and one of the girls would be along."

"Then do let me try that."

In due time, Jake came from the stable, leading three horses, all saddled and bridled, and ready for flight. Moll Pitcher walked forth with as discreet and deliberate an air as any grandmother; but the girl who stood on the horse-block, waiting for her, was all alive with pleasant excitement.

"Oh, how high I am!" she exclaimed, when she was in the saddle. "Why, the creature is all neck! How funny it feels when she begins to move! I expect to cling to this saddle-horn as if my life depended on it."

"Oh, no; you don't need to touch that," said Kate, springing onto Elfie, and wheeling to her side. "You may just as well get used to independence first as last."

Will was mounted, and they rode slowly along together over the hill, while she became used to the motion. Then came a level space along the high ground. The road was too narrow for three abreast, and the young horses sprang forward to enjoy their speed along the smooth ground. Old Moll, desirous to do her duty, went into a good round trot, as the best she could do to keep up with Elfie's graceful lope and the colt's fancy dances. Theodora's

hat shook back, her hair shook down, and she shook to the centre. She saw Kate look over her shoulder as she flitted along under the trees before her, then turn her horse and canter back to her, laughing.

"Moll is pretty rough, isn't she?"

"Oh, such bouncing and such jouncing never befell me before, since I was a small baby! If this is the pleasure of horseback riding, it's a delusion and a snare! Is it all because I am so raw at it? You and Will go like centaurs."

"Moll isn't a pleasant riding-horse, anywhere between a walk and the fastest gallop she can go. We won't go fast to-day. We shall be in time. We thought she was best for you, because she has no tricks, you know, and is always so good; but, when you get a little used to it, you can take Elfie, and you will like it better."

Kate held the bridle while the hair and the hat were set right. Will's horse was impatiently curvetting about. At last they started on again. Moll had the great merit of being a rapid walker, and her companions were checked to keep back with her.

"It's a shame for me to spoil your ride; you were going so beautifully. You just go on, and let me jog after as I can."

"Oh, it's no difference," said Will, whose colt was chafing and sweating at the restraint.

"If we should start, Moll would think she ought to come too. Besides, if we go slowly, you can see all the better what sort of a place you have come to," said Kate.

Some people yield their pleasure to yours with an air which says, "Oh, certainly; it wouldn't be polite to do anything else; but then, of course, it is a sacrifice." Other people have too much courtesy and tact to betray

the feeling, though they have it. It seemed to Theodora, then and afterward, that Kate Bradley belonged to that rare number who make the pleasure of others so much their own, that they do not count the sacrifice, in their secret hearts. Perhaps that was one reason she had so many friends.

As they all paced quietly along together, Theodora began to wonder at the beauty of the ride she had passed over in the dark, the night she came. It lay, she found, along the crest of one of those billows she had spoken of to her uncle.

"Stop a minute and look at it," said Kate, pleased at Theodora's cry of delight, as they reached the point where the ridge began to break towards the level of the river. "*We* think it is pretty."

On their right, the wave-like hills, which skirted the horizon, sank to the broad valley with graceful curves,

> "As if God's finger touched, but did not press
> In making" them.

The golden greens which rested on the dimpled meadows, in creeping up the hill-sides, sobered to the richer hues of forest foliage. A river glittered from among the trees; and away opposite, the circling hills parted to let it find its way to the broader Ohio, giving glimpses of bluer heights beyond.

"Is it mist, or cloud, or smoke, that hangs over that opening in the hills?" asked Theodora.

"That is Wheeling smoke," Will answered; "it is thin, Sunday mornings. By the time the citizens sit down to their dinners it will be darker."

"I think I can endure it to live in the smoke, if I can only come up and get this view once in a while."

"Why can't you come out and spend every Sunda with us?"

"Oh, if I only can!"

"We must see about that," said Kate; "but you mu take a look down this other side as well, Theodora!"

The smaller valley on the left seemed to shut in a peaceful last retreat, as that on the other side opene out towards the great world. The creek wound under tl grey arches of an old bridge, quiet homes nestled in tl nooks of the forest, a small stone church looked grave out from over-hanging trees, and, from the hill-side belc it gleamed the white memorial marbles of God's Acre.

The horses thought time enough had been given gazing, and moved on. Theodora exclaimed at t broad, low, irregular steps of stone which cropped throu the soil and formed the road here at the point of t ridge.

"Yes, we always call this spot 'The Limestone Rocks, remarked Kate.

"We generally take a short cut here," said Will, tur ing short off into the woods.

"What? can we go down such a steep place?"

"Oh, yes," answered Kate, "Moll won't mind it, a all you have to do is to stay on her back."

That was a simple thing to do, and it was curious watch the horses choosing their foothold so skillfully amo the interlacing roots.

A few minutes more and they were on the broad, fl level of the National Road beside the creek. Along t other side of it comes an old grey horse, keeping tir with his nodding head, to a gentle trot. He carrie woman on his back with a wee girl in her lap, and a b riding behind, his arms around his mother's wai

Plash! here they come through the creek, the horse sipping a drink first, then breaking all the glassy reflections into ripples as he walks, splashing, across. Now and then can be seen through the branches, winding down a hill farther on, a picturesque cavalcade of young men and maidens on horseback.

Just where the broad turnpike crosses the creek, and sweeps around a curve, stands an old family mansion of the same grey stone as the bridge. Elms, older than itself, sweep its mossy roof and throw their shadows on the grass-plot in front. Two little negroes are dabbling in the creek, where it washes the edge of the lawn.

On the green near the end of the bridge, and in fine harmony with the massive grace of its arches, stands a statue-monument.

"It is to Henry Clay," answered Kate to Theodora's inquiry.

"But that isn't Henry Clay!"

"No, it's Liberty, or something or other—better-looking, no doubt."

"Modern gentlemen don't make remarkably beautiful statues, to be sure; but, pray, how should there happen to be a statue to the great Kentuckian, right here by the roadside?"

"It was he that secured the appropriation from Congress to build this National Road," answered Will. "He used to pass through here on his way to Washington, and the mud was that deep sometimes, the stages could hardly get through. One of the principal contractors who built the road, lived in this old mansion-house, and he and his wife put up this monument in honor of the statesman, and of internal improvements in general, as you will see by the inscription. Contractors have learned

more practical ways of acknowledging the services of Congressmen since those days!"

The small stone church stood in the edge of a grove, and horses were tied to nearly all the trees near it.

Our party rode up to a fallen tree, and Will helped Theodora to dismount. Kate was as independent as he. While he led away the horses, the girls slipped off their riding-skirts, doffed their gauntlets, donned their "kids," and were duly adjusted in proper Sunday costume.

There was no preaching that day, as the minister had gone to Synod; but after Sunday-school the congregation was resolved into a prayer-meeting. One of the Elders read a chapter, and after that, it was a prayer and a hymn alternately, right through. There were no remarks. They omitted no verses in the hymns, and there were so many pleasant voices in the congregation that the service of song was quite delightful. Theodora had often stood in a sad maze before the saying: "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." She knew a great many church-members who were disagreeable to her, and some of the people she liked best did not profess to be Christians. Did she lack the sign? As she listened to the prayers of these strangers, she found her heart warming with friendliness towards them, and the more so the more loving, and humble, and sincere the petition sounded. The cracked voice of a little old man who sat near her had been wandering up and down in search of the tune, in such a comical fashion that she found it hard to keep sober; but when he was called upon to pray, and she heard his tender, earnest pleading for God's blessing on the young people of the congregation, she felt a reverence for him. When he tried to sing the next time, she had no inclination to

smile. "I do love the Spirit of Christ; I know I do," she said to herself. "I can't love a coarse or hard, opinionated, censorious person, or a sanctimonious one, just because he calls himself by the name of Christ; but I believe I do love people just so far as they show by their spirit that they are His brethren."

There is something sweet in worshiping with an assembly where the only bond is the common love for one Saviour, and all the every-day pettinesses that neighbors cannot but see in each other are unknown. Theodora felt that she had indeed worshiped God with His people, as she sat in the little church, catching glimpses of the blue heavens through the grace of swaying branches.

After they were dismissed, she stood on the door-step, interested to watch the people as they loitered on the green in front of the church.

That group of men are talking about the election; she knows it by the decided nods that emphasize their opinions; if it were a week day they would be gesturing with both arms. Here is an old mother telling a young one in Sabbatical tones, what is the best treatment for croup. The knot of lads and lasses yonder is getting so hilarious as to draw disapproving glances from their elders. There is a Sunday-school teacher having a few last words with one of her little boys. How persuasive and serious her face looks, and how sheepishly he digs his toe into the turf! Now people are mounting. There goes the young mother who has learned how to cure the croup. She is on a white pony, and has a beautiful two-year-old boy in her lap; her husband walks beside her, and they look like the Holy Family going into Egypt. Here, a family carriage is taking its freight, but the eyes of the new-comer follow the riders.

"You see the old lady on a sorrel horse, just starting from under that oak tree?" asked Bessie.

"With such a faded riding-skirt, and such a nice, grandmotherly face?"

"Yes; she is over seventy years old, and she never rode in a carriage."

The old lady sat talking with a neighbor, as much at ease as if at home in her rocking-chair, while the old sorrel tried to kick off a fly.

"Wouldn't you like to try Elfie?" asked Kate. "She will be sure to behave well going home, I think, and she goes so much easier."

"Thank you; if you think it safe, I should."

"Just feel safe, hold a taut rein, and you will be safe."

They wended their way slowly down the hill. A few of the people were on foot, a good many in carriages, but far the greater number on horseback. They could be seen singly, in pairs, or cavalcades, turning off under the trees on all the hill roads. The sight was so pretty, that Theodora almost forgot herself, till Elfie, as if at a wink from Will's colt beside her, bounded off in a swift canter. The new sensation took away her breath for the instant, but directly she felt secure in her seat, and gave herself up to the exhilarating motion. It was a new joy. A delicious sense of freedom and power thrilled through every nerve. Dark arches of the bridge, trees mirrored in the stream, children by the wayside, a white cloud floating in the blue, friends riding beside, the rhythmic beat of hoofs on the highway, all blended unreckoned in a tide of triumphant life and delight, as they flew over the road. But now the horses sober themselves for work as they turn from the level pike, and the pleasure changes from that intoxicating draught to a leisurely-

sipping of beauty and enjoyment, as they climb the forest road to the home. Two or three young friends of the Bradleys joined them. Theodora thought them sensible, pleasant-looking young men, and remarked especially that they rode as if they had been "raised" in the saddle.

As they rode up, Mr. Bradley was sitting on the porch with a large Bible on his knee, and Rover beside him, lying with his nose on his paws. He gave them a pleasant greeting, and said to his niece, "I seldom go to church for I cannot hear well; I am contented to get my sermons at headquarters," tapping the open Bible with his spectacles.

After dinner there was a nice long time to read; then the cousins had a pleasant walk and talk, going out to one of the hill-tops on the farm.

"This is the first time I ever was in a place where I felt sure it was right to go to walk, Sunday," said Theodora. "In a town, if one may go, another may, and instead of a lovely solitude where God's beautiful world will help on your Sabbath, it becomes a general promenade, where you are just noticing your neighbors, or gossiping with them. Now here, the home spreads over two or three hundred acres, so that you can have the good of all this beauty, and yet not meet anybody."

In the twilight, they gathered around the piano in the parlor,—for what home is complete without its Sunday evening "sing?" As she joined in the old tunes, which she knew her dearest ones would be singing also, Theodora felt that it was rounding out a golden day, and she was nestling into a second home.

XIV.

LIFE IN THE SMOKE.

HER week at Esmadura made Theodora feel that whatever her city experience might prove, the strength of the hills was behind her. Life there refreshed her.

To spend a whole day at a time, hearing only the natural farm noises, seeing nobody but the genial family she was in, yet knowing that in the comfortable farm-houses that could be seen throned amid their principalities of beautiful hills, miles away, on every side, were pleasant neighbors; this was an odd contrast to the rush and whirl of New York.

The ways of the people were altogether different from her notions of the South. Rich farmers and their families worked with their own hands; but they had nothing of the cramped and rugged look of people who had grown old before their time, wresting a living from a reluctant soil.

Her cousins' friends whom she met were lively, sensible young people, with a frank, hearty manner, though a little shy of her at first. Some dreadfully disagreeable characters must have gone, at an early day, from the East to the West and South, else the stock idea of a Yankee as a critical, supercilious, stingy, hair-splitting personage could not have risen and held its ground in the face of all the thousands of cordial, generous New Englanders who

have made themselves loved and honored wherever they have gone.

It was one of the brightest of September mornings that Mr. Bradley took his niece into Wheeling to introduce her to her new home. The smoky canopy of the city looked comparatively gauzy, and only toned down the sunshine to an opaline glow as they came under its shadow.

Directly on entering the town, he turned into the street which ran along the high bank of the river. Here were inviting dwelling-houses and a beautiful background of Ohio hills. Theodora chose to amuse her curiosity rather than ask questions, but she waited eagerly to see if this was the street. Here was really a pleasant edge to the dreaded town. She picked out the house she wished it would be—not the most modern in the row, but one that looked like an old family mansion, as if three or four generations of sons and daughters had moved about among the tall columns that supported its gable. The grass-plot in front of this was the brightest green of them all, and there was a broad gleam of the river to be caught between it and its next neighbor.

"Is this Mr. Torrington's?" she asked, in surprise, as her uncle drew up in front of this very house.

"Yes, this is your abiding-place for the present."

The uncomfortable sensation that she was going to be scrutinized was almost forgotten in her pleasure at finding the place itself so much more agreeable than she had dreamed of.

The next day she wrote to Miriam:

"I like them all, and they act as if they liked me. I dreaded Mrs. Torrington, but she met me so cordially I was captivated at once. She is a new kind in my little

world and interests me immensly. Southern all throug
I can see already that she holds all classes and conditic
of women who work for a living to be made of some d
ferent dust from her, and I should have expected
would hold me at a distance; but she chooses to look
me as the niece of her husband's friend, rather than a
music-teacher. She is fairly affectionate in her manr
since a sing we had last night. She has a full, sweet s
prano voice, not highly cultivated, but unspoiled, an
she seemed delighted to have a contralto to sing with.
She declares I must take her, as well as the children,
under my tuition.

"They did not say so in set terms, but they showed ir
many ways that they were not a little pleased with m
music, especially the singing. Mrs. Torrington is
brunette, with a clear, olive skin, very large, brillian
eyes, with such long, thick eyelashes that they make al
most as much impression when the lids droop as whe
they are lifted. She must have been married very young
Aleck, the oldest boy, looks more like her younge
brother than her son. He is a lively, good-natured fe
low, who has evidently been getting inches faster than h
knows what to do with them. His mother is continuall
making fun of him for some awkwardness or cons
quential remark, but, at the same time, as he and every on
else can see, she is extremely fond of him. The gir
Carolina (*South* Carolina, I suppose), called Carro, an
spelled Caro, who is to be, I suppose, my chief charge, i
a miniature of her mother, though that style is not s
handsome for a child as for a woman. The little girl ha
one charm in her face, however, which Mrs. T. has no
At the least excitement, a rich color flushes up under he
dark skin; then it dies away as suddenly as it came. S

she sits and gazes at me with her big eyes, and says thing. It would go hard if she shouldn't like me; she s a will of her own, if that decided little chin tells the uth. Mr. Torrington is a fine, dignified-looking man—eems more like a judge than an attorney. It did me good to hear him talk about Uncle Graham this morning —he couldn't have more respect for the moral character of the Angel Abdiel. Mrs. T. speaks of her husband as several years older than herself, and he certainly looks so. But I mustn't leave out the rest of the family! Bless their little hearts, no indeed! There is a brace of the cunningest little girls that ever your eyes lighted upon —twins, two years old—Pinky-Winky they call them, as if they were a double little girl instead of two. I believe the first one is named Henrietta Josephine Pinkney Torrington, and the other Winifred Wilhelmina Sumter T. The small women being unable to stagger on under these stupendous designations, have been let down to Pinky for Pinkney, and Winky for Winifred. I wish you could see them.; they are pretty and cute beyond all telling. Their nurse, Phillis, is a black woman, as imposing as Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, and she loves these two bairns like the two great white apples of her eyes. It is a sight for a painter to see her broad, bronze face, with a red turban above it, and these fair little faces cuddled down in her black neck on either side. All the servants are colored—the cook, a perfect study of grotesqueness. Violet, the chamber girl, would be quite handsome if her lips didn't roll out so as if her mouth had been popped, like a kernel of corn. Cæsar, who waits on the table, feels the dignity of his office as much as if he were Grand Vizier, and sets down a plate of rolls with as dramatic a flourish as if it were the culminating

act of his career. I have only five minutes more before this goes to the office, but I must just tell you that the view from the whole back of the house—my room included—is charming. The river is muddy, to be sure, after our lovely, pure Connecticut, but there are a hundred shadows and reflections to disguise that; the bridge, the steamboats, the sunset among the hills opposite, the red light of the nail factory down the river at night—I wish you could see them all! Be sure and write every week, faithfully, to

"YOUR FAR-AWAY SISTER."

Three months later she wrote:

"I have been holding on to my patience with both hands all day, and it is a great relief to let go, and just sit down at this river window and have a chat with my Miriam.

"In the first place, just as I was ready for breakfast, I caught my gown on my trunk, and tore one of those beautiful little three-cornered rents, and had to stop and darn it. I wonder if I shall ever be old enough to be done tearing my clothes! Your garments always sweep gracefully past, intact; and mine, though I follow in exactly the same track, make malicious little flouts and swings on purpose to catch on every nail or splinter that affords the slightest chance.

"Then when I went downstairs, I found Mrs. Torrington in a rage at Caro. Really in a rage! It passes my understanding how such a lovely woman could scold so! Most of the time, she is delightful in the family; she shows every day that she loves her husband and children with all her heart; she counts nothing too much to do for her friends; but when anything provokes her, she

literally 'gets mad.' I don't suppose she would believe, afterward, if anyone should tell her, what cruel things she says when she is in a passion. She forgets them; she spends her fury and comes out, after a little, as bright and generous as ever; but those that hear cannot forget. She can't scatter 'firebrands, arrows, and death,' that way, without leaving fires to smoulder and wounds to rankle, long after she has forgotten all about it. It was awful to hear her talk so to Caro. I didn't think the child was so very much to blame; and if she had been, that would only have made it worse. She inherits her mother's traits, and it seemed so unjust to give her that mettlesome temper, and then lash it into madness! It made my blood boil. We never can be thankful enough, Miriam, for a father and mother that control their temper. I don't think we ever were *scolded* in our lives, do you? Reproved and expostulated with and all that; by all means made to mind, but I can't remember either father or mother saying a *cross* word to me. And it's odd, Mrs. Torrington never seems to blame herself. I believe she is a Christian woman. She talks and acts like it, in many ways, but it really seems as if she thought she did well to be angry. She doesn't bring her conscience to bear upon it. While I feel so ashamed for her that I can hardly stay in the room, I believe that she doesn't feel at all that she is doing anything unbecoming a lady or a Christian. I felt dreadfully about Caro this morning, for she is trying to learn to rule herself. She is a dear child—you don't know what a devoted little lover of mine she is. Only last evening, I had an earnest talk with her about mastering her temper, and then to have her own mother burst out upon her so!

"Well—grievance No. 3 wasn't so very serious, still it

gave my patience a nudge in the 'crazy bone.' I was to go, for the first time, to Mrs. Maynard's to give a lesson. I knew they were rather grand people, and I wanted to make a creditable impression, so I put on my bran-new kid gloves; running downstairs, I laid my hand on the balustrade, and when I got to the bottom, there was my glove black with smut! This coal dust is an ugly thing to be sprinkled over one's existence. You never could endure it, you dainty Lady-bird! They take nice care of the house—do cleaning enough every day to last a New England house a month; but this fine soot is driving in all the time, at every crevice, and our own fires, while they blaze in a style to shame hard coal, are all the time giving it off. Every little while I find my hands looking as if they were struck with mortification. I lay my handkerchief on the table and take it up, peppered with coal-dust. I have been giving lessons all day; last of all, to a young woman who makes discords with the serenest countenance I ever saw. I explain and correct, play it for her, say 'Now you will do it right;' she gazes intently at the piano all the while. Then she lifts those 'awful paws' and pounds down exactly as she did in the first place. I came near falling into the same sin I had been shocked at and scolding the girl, but I am satisfied she is not careless; she is stupid, and has no more ear for music than a mule; to upbraid her for those misfortunes would be about as mean as to taunt a hunchback with his deformity. So, as I said in the first place, I held on to my patience by main force.

"There, now, my dear, I feel relieved—having dumped my load of vexations at your feet. You can excuse me, as the big man did his little wife for beating him: 'It relieves her, and doesn't hurt me.' I ought to have re-

marked, that most of my music-class are as promising girls as I could ask for; and as to Mrs. Torrington, you must know she has never shown *me* anything but courtesy and kindness, and I really love and admire her, in spite of her temper. Her children—whom she loves like her own life—have to take the brunt of that. After all, she is a much better mother than Mrs. Jack Walton. It harms children less to be blown sky-high once in a while than it does to be pecked at the whole time. These children love their mother, and they fear her. It seemed as if the little Waltons did neither the one nor the other. Mr. Torrington never scolds. He knows how to be stern, but he is usually very pleasant with the children, and can command them with a look. He is a very interesting talker. He is not a politician, but he likes to look into the history and philosophy of politics; and there is nothing I like better than to get him to discussing such subjects, especially if some other gentleman is present who knows enough to enter into it with him. How every family, or at least every profession, has its own line of conversation! I enjoy hearing Mr. T. and his guests talk over courts and cases just as I did, at home, the theological debates and parish affairs. In the Walton table-talk, the world seemed built for business-men, and, at Uncle Bradley's, for the farmers.

"You will have to give your girls a holiday to get time to read this long epistle. All about myself, too! What of that? I like to have you write all about yourself.

"How little we can get into a letter! I have yards of things to say; but I must stop for this time.

"I am, now,

"Quite a good-natured

"THEODORA."

Her own letters gave little idea how strong an influence the young music-teacher was exerting. In fact, she did not fully know. Her pupils found her a good teacher; she not only drilled them well, but she showed a rare faculty for opening their souls to the meaning and beauty of music. Still, she would have been dissatisfied if she could have done no more than this for them. She felt that to influence character is the only work that will last. Her own spirituality had deepened through the experiences of the year past; and she tried, in a hundred friendly ways, to win the girls, who gave her their love, to the service of Christ, and to inspire their lives with sweetness and strength.

XV.

THE PANIC.

THE Camerons were all together for the first time in two years. It was in July, of the ever-memorable year 1861. First came Miriam, from Downington—beginning to get a certain queenliness of womanhood as time developed and solidified her figure, and responsibility added a sense of strength to her shy, proud dignity of old. She had been resting, telling stories of her experience to Faith and Jessie, and holding consultations with the father and mother, only a few days, when Donald came home from college, still aglow from his success at Junior exhibition.

"He isn't so handsome as he used to be," said Faith, regretfully, to Miriam, after they had gone upstairs, at night.

"But he will be handsomer."

"What makes you think so? He has lost that rich color he used to have, and his face looks like a field of Winter wheat just sprouting, in patches."

"What of all that? The color was beautiful for a boy, but it wouldn't look well for a man, and the beard will be an ornament to his face, a few months hence. What a strong, graceful figure he has already."

"He has improved in manner very much, within the year, at any rate," said Faith. "He has nearly got over that self-sufficient air he had when he came home Sopho-

more. Don't you notice how much more deferential he is towards father?"

"Yes," answered Miriam, "and more gentle with mother, too. I do delight in seeing Donald and mother together—he is so roguish and charming with her, and she is so fond and proud with him."

A few days later came Robert from Minnesota—called East by business with Mr. Walton, and, with him, Theodora, who had joined him on the way. So now the house was ringing with young life.

Home is very dear to an only child; but what does the poor creature know of the rapturous welcomes, the dear old jokes, the spicy family allusions, the racy gossip, the frank criticisms and no less frank praises of each other; in short, of all the reëchoing joys that make up that climax of "sacred and home-felt delight" which a house-ful of brothers and sisters enjoy when they come home from a dispersion?

"Who could have imagined it would be in time of war that we should meet again!" exclaimed the mother, as they were gathered around the breakfast-table the first morning.

"Don't you know, mother," asked Donald, "how wrought up we used to be with your stories of our great-grandfather's exploits in the Revolution?"

"Yes, I used to wish I could live in such grand times," said Theodora. "I was sure I should do something heroic."

"'Such grand times' are pleasanter to hear about than to live in," said Miriam, with a shudder.

"Will this war be seven years long?" asked Jessie, who was fresh from United States' history, and anxious to make use of her information.

The family laughed at the idea of a seven-years' war, and Robert remarked:

"No doubt this rebellion will be put down in the course of six months."

"I am not so sure of that," said his father. "It is the same blood on both sides,—resolute, courageous, persistent. Wealth and numbers are in favor of the North; but the South is far better trained in the arts of war; nearly all the West Point officers are on their side. They have been years preparing for this very effort, so that they have an immense advantage to begin with; now that they have joined issue, they must feel that everything is at stake, and I fear there is a long, desperate struggle before us."

"Perhaps we shall hear of a great victory this morning, which will turn the scale," said Faith.

The papers of the day before had been full of reports of a coming engagement.

"Do you remember, Donald, that speech of Webster's you used to be so fond of declaiming?" asked the mother, as they rose from the table. "'When my eyes'—what was that?"

Striking into the tones and gestures of his boyish eloquence, Donald repeated:

"'When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union; on States dissevered, discordant, belligerent; on a land rent with civil feuds or drenched, it may be, in fraternal blood! Let their last feeble and lingering glance rather behold the glorious ensign of the republic, now known and honored through all the earth, still full high advanced, its arms and trophies streaming in their

original lustre, not a stripe erased or polluted, nor a single star obscured!'"

"I used to think that was merely a rhetorical flourish," said Miriam. "I did not suppose anyone really thought that the Union could be disturbed,—least of all, in our day."

As the family were about dispersing after prayers, the father already gone to his study, Theodora said:

"Now, mother, give us all our work, just as you used to, won't you?"

"Yes, do!" the rest chimed in.

"Only don't make me rock the cradle, as you used to!" said Robert. "How I did hate it!"

"Why, I always thought you were very good about it," said his mother, smiling up into his eyes, with her hand on his shoulder, his arm around her.

"Well, I thought it my duty to help you raise the promising family," said he, with a comprehensive gesture towards the group laughing and talking around them.

"But you despised it for a womanish occupation—" said Miriam.

"And inwardly chafed, like Achilles, with his distaff," added Faith.

"I did it, though; I rocked you every one," said the eldest brother. "Nobody knows, unless it's mother, her what I have been through with you; how contrary you were, and how, the more I rocked you, the more you wouldn't go to sleep."

"We are more than thankful; do let us repay your kindness," exclaimed Donald; and in a twinkling they had him down in the great rocking-chair which stood behind him, and all five of them were holding him in and rocking him furiously, singing, "Rock-a-by-baby" and

"Hush, my dear," between their shouts of laughter, as they resisted his frantic efforts to escape them. He was more than a match for them all, however, and presently broke loose and shook himself, saying:

"There, mother, you see what a set they are; after all the pains we have taken with them, how they do behave!"

She had looked on, laughing, and begging them to spare the rocking-chair.

"Just as anxious to get to work as they used to be, aren't they, Robert?"

"Oh, yes! what shall we do?" they asked, as they suddenly sobered and stood around her, demurely.

How happy she looked, between her tall sons, with her four bright daughters about her, even Jessie, who nestled most closely, by right of the youngest, almost as tall as herself!

Time has wrought the ten years of hard but happy work, since we saw her first, into her face and figure, but he has done it with a tender touch, like the true servant of Him who hath made everything beautiful in its season. The frost shed upon her dark hair only brings it into perfect harmony with the fainter tints and the softened outlines of her face, the sweeter peace of her blue eyes.

"The boys," she said, "may, first of all, go down street, and bring us the news from the seat of war; Miriam may put the chambers and sitting-room in order; Theodora we won't ask to do anything, but unpack her trunk, this morning; Faith will have to clear away the breakfast things, I think, and Jessie may help—"

"Oh, mother!" she broke in, "do let me help Theodora."

"She doesn't need you; she would rather take care of her own things."

"Miriam, then—let me help Miriam."

"Ah, I see to the bottom of your deep designs," said Faith; "you want to get upstairs, where you can see everything Theodora takes out of her trunk and hear everything she says. Jessie is a fickle courtier," she went on, pulling a handful of the child's sunny curls. "It's 'The King is dead! Long live the King!' with her. She always sticks to the last arrival."

"You had better wipe the dishes for Faith," said Miriam.

Jessie looked wofully divided in mind.

"Oh, no," said Faith, "let her go upstairs and help make the beds, what time she isn't sitting on the edge of Theodora's trunk."

"And the mother of them all," said Mrs. Cameron, "will be making a dinner they used to like."

"Oh, what?" "I know!" "I guess—"

"None of your guesses; it is a state secret and I sha'n't tell—now go about your work, children!"

Half an hour later, Faith came to the foot of the stairs with a plate in one hand, and a clean soft wiping-towel in the other, called:

"Don't be interesting, girls! Don't let Theodora tell anything till I come."

"Oh! she is telling us about coming through Baltimore, and seeing just where the Massachusetts Sixth was attacked," said Jessie, running to the head of the stairs; "you can't think how interesting it is!"

"No, no! You mustn't tell that, I want to hear every word of it," said Faith.

"Come up and hear it then," said Theodora. "You can't think how real it made the war—"

"Of course it did; but don't you see it takes all my virtue to stay down here, washing these dishes, when you are having such a delicious time up there? See here, Miriam, I will change work with you, awhile."

At this moment, the brothers came hurriedly in, looking strangely excited.

"What is it?" asked Faith. "What is the news?" called the other sisters, running to the head of the stairs.

"Bad enough!" answered Robert. "Where's father?"

The study door was already open and Mr. Cameron's head appeared above those of the girls.

"We are beaten," said Robert.

"Shamefully beaten!" added Donald, his eyes flashing with hot tears of wrath and shame. "Our men ran like sheep."

"*Ran!*" burst from all lips with an accent of dismay.

Meanwhile Robert had found his mother in the pantry, and brought her, with hands still floury, to hear the sad news.

"No papers have come," Donald was saying, "but the dispatch is 'Terrible panic—total route'!"

"I wouldn't have believed our men were cowards!" exclaimed Faith.

"They are not cowards; they cannot be," said Robert; "we must hear something different."

"If they had only been killed, we could have borne it," said Theodora, "but to *run!*" and she crowded the rest of her sentence into a groan and a clenched hand.

"Their mothers and sisters don't say that, child. Let us be thankful at least for their lives," said the mother.

"I don't know," Theodora answered. "I believe a dead lion is better than a live dog. I should rather any-

body that I loved should die like a hero, than run lik coward, though he did save his life by it."

Donald laid up that word in his heart.

"My wonder is that soldiers don't always run," s Miriam. "I can't imagine how a man can stand to shot at."

"I suppose it's because he thinks more of shooting t being shot," said Faith, thoughtfully, rubbing off a mc of lint she had just rubbed on to her plate.

"It is an awful humiliation!" said Mr. Came leaning back against the door-post with his hands bel him, and his brows knit. "We are disgraced before world, and it will be better to the rebels than a reinf ment of ten thousand men."

"Not much like the spirit of '76," remarked mother, who had drunk in pride of ancestral prowe her grandfather's knee. "I am afraid our money-get times have killed out the old heroism."

"Then I think human nature may as well be given as a bad job," exclaimed Donald impetuously; "the no better stuff in it than these Northern States started with, and if they cannot stand two or t generations of prosperity, the world isn't worth li in."

As he was speaking, the front door opened and Joyce, with the privilege of a near neighbor, cam without knocking.

"Well!" he exclaimed with a grim smile, "'pea me, you don't look very cheerful, this morning."

Donald was roving to and fro like a caged tiger. Ro half sitting on the hall table, was absently beating boot with his brother's rattan. His mother was in a c beside him, the flour on her hands looking striki

elevant to the solemn expression of her face. Faith t on the lowest stair, and Miriam on the uppermost. esting her chin on the pillow she happened to have in ner arms when she ran from making the beds to hear the news; her father stood just behind her; Theodora sat on the step below her, with her elbows on her knees, and her face between her hands; Jessie leaned over the balustrade, watching the rest and wondering whether the rebels had got as far as Boston. Every countenance was a study of chagrin and dissappointment.

"Not very cheerful news this morning," Mr. Cameron made answer, coming downstairs, as he spoke.

"Well, it's nothing more nor different from what I expected," said Mr. Joyce; "Yankees ha'n't any fight in 'em. Thousands of 'em never fired a gun before, in their lives, and it ain't to be wondered at they was scared at the sound of their own fire-arms."

"They will know what the sound means next time," said Mr. Cameron; "it is not strange such a thing should happen with an unwieldy mass of raw troops, the first time they are brought into action. It proves nothing against their fighting capacity nor their final success."

Mr. Joyce shrugged his shoulders and his eyebrows. "Now, Southerners are brought up to make soldiers. It's jest as much a matter of course for a boy to learn to shoot as to write."

"*More*, Mr. Joyce," Robert put in.

"Then it's their way to resent an injury; they ha'n't no scruples about it. Our folks are used to dallyin' along—goin' to court and suin' for damages if anybody interferes with 'em; but Southerners, they pitch right in and settle their difficulties themselves; they're used to it.

"That makes a pleasant state of society," remarke

Faith; "you are so sure justice will be done when everybody feels at liberty to pitch right into you, as soon as he supposes himself aggrieved."

"Guess our folks have changed their minds a little about its bein' so dreadful easy to 'whip the rebels,'" said Mr. Joyce, with a silent, chuckling laugh that made the veins stand out on his forehead; "I told 'em they didn't know what they was about; they 'd find they 'd caught a Tartar. They was goin' to settle it all in this great battle, and here they be, horse, foot, and dragoons, runnin' for dear life—every one for himself on a double-quick for home. I should jest like to have seen them members of Congress, that went out to see the vict'ry, takin' to their heels!" and Mr. Joyce threw himself back in his chair, and laughed, displaying the fact that he needed four new teeth in the upper row.

This man must have been intended for a psychologist; there was nothing interested him so much as mental anatomy, especially the anatomy of melancholy. If there was a bit of unsavory news to be told, he was sure to make his way to that person who would have the greatest distaste for it. Nothing pleased him so much as to watch the patient while he administered the dose, whether he "made up a face" or restrained his grimaces and tried to look as if it tasted well.

It was quite in character that when these disastrous tidings came, he should go to the warmest Unionists he knew, rather than the three or four in town who sympathized with secession.

"I guess our boys remembered some of them peace sermons you used to preach, all of a sudden, and thought they 'd better stop fightin'," he went on, pleased with his wit.

"I think you will find, in the long run, Mr. Joyce, that men make none the worse soldiers for being disciplined to peace and order. Hard wood doesn't kindle at a touch, but it makes a hot fire."

"Well—there's two thousand of 'em that 'll never do any more fightin', any way," he remarked, bringing down his chair from two legs to four with a decided air.

"What! Not two thousand killed!" exclaimed Mrs. Cameron.

"That's the word—at the very lowest calculation."

"Then there were two thousand that didn't run away, Mr. Joyce," said Theodora. "Our army must have stood its ground till that much slaughter was made."

"Panics have taken some of the best armies in the world," said Mr. Cameron.

"I don't know 'bout that," replied Mr. Joyce, setting on the floor the sole of his boot which he had been examining, mounted on the knee of his other leg. "One thing I can tell ye—you never will conquer them Southerners—never. They are a proud, resolute race."

"We all come of one race, I believe," answered Mr. Cameron. "It remains to be seen whether it is developed best under a system of slave labor or under one like our own.

"Well; we shall see what we shall see," and with this indisputable statement, the neighbor picked up his hat and departed.

Later in the morning, Robert went to take counsel with his mother, as he used to when he was a boy, while she was at work in the pantry. How many times since, he had longed to get back to that very spot and watch her as she moulded their daily bread, and tell her all his perplexities and get her wisdom, so mingled with moth-

erly kindness. Right before her, as she stood at th flour-board, was a window which had refreshed her so with beauty year by year.

Looking between the horizontal leafy branches of oak, where squirrels were running to and fro, she co see wide reaches of delicious green—the serried ranks the corn with its shining blades and tossing plumes— billowy shades of the wheat-field—the lines of flicker willows, guarding ancient landmarks—here and ther queenly elm, the choicest heirloom of some farm—gle of sunny water from the Manatusuc, on its way to the broader river; farther away that wreath of sh bery which always graces the banks of the Connect marked, while it hid, the course of the stream. R across meadow and river, shot a railroad, a blemis first; but now that Nature had adopted it, and grasse banks and mossed its bridges, and thrown a few bl berry vines over its abutments, an added beauty, its l ness-like directness throwing in relief the soft curves which the often overflowing river had washed all outl about it; even the locomotive rushing across those fi of living green, with its steam-clouds catching in the tops, was a picturesque embodiment of man's n energy contrasted with the silent might of God's petual working. Beyond the broad meadows, ros amphitheatre of hills; beyond them again, distant m tains; and beyond them, the deep sky. No hour of day but shed its own charm on this scene, and not was lost on Mrs. Cameron. Her love of beauty w have suffered from hunger if her busy life had lain in dull precincts of a crowded town.

Robert sat down on the meal-chest beside her, abse watching her making a strawberry shortcake.

"Mother, tell me what I ought to do."

She glanced into his face, guessing only too well what he had in mind.

"I would enlist before the sun goes down, if it wasn't for Jenny, and I don't know but I ought to anyway!"

So it had begun to come! This was the very thing which had made her heart tremble every night since the great call to arms in April.

"Don't you think there are enough that can go, better than you?" she asked.

"I am well and strong, and I want to do my part; I hate shirking; but I don't know what Jenny would do if anything should happen to me."

His mother dared not speak. She had done her best to make her boys patriots; she had taught them,—

"That a country's a thing men should die for at need,"

but she was a timid, tender mother. In her thoughts, to enlist was to be killed; already she could see her Robert bleeding on the battle-field. Besides this great trouble, she found room for a little inferior pain. Is any mother so utterly unselfish as to abdicate the dearest place in the heart of her first-born without a pang? She was glad to have Robert married; she had written sweet, cordial letters to his wife, but this was the first time they had met since his marriage, and it was not yet easy to feel that one she had never seen was first in his thoughts. She could not know that his mother only grew more wonderful and precious to him as his life deepened.

Robert went on:

"If she should be left now, she would have nothing but my life-insurance. I have put everything else into the farm; one more payment makes that ours; if I fail

then, the mortgage is foreclosed and I lose all. You se
if I go right along and am prospered as I have been,
could finish up in this next year; if I leave it, nothir
will be done of any account; it is hard to get workin
men already."

"I don't see how you can go now," said the moth
with a sense of relief. "One year makes more diff
ence to you now than five will by and by."

"But it seems mean to mind one's own interest at s
a time," he answered. "It would not be so hard to g
it was different with Jenny's father." He picked up
little "jagger" with which his mother had been mark
the cake, and began drawing cogged lines all over the
of dough that lay on the corner of the flour-board r
him, perplexity working itself out at his fingers' e
"You see, Mr. Hague never liked our marriage m
He wanted Jenny to marry a rich man. Then his s
pathies are all with the South. I never could have
wife any way dependent on him again, least of all if I
killed fighting against his principles."

"Why not rest on the decision that it isn't your d
to go at present? If the war lasts, and you are nee
then, you could leave your wife well provided fo
another year, couldn't you?"

"Yes, if all goes well."

He sat silent, gazing out at the window, but not s
he saw anything the hither side of the mountains.
his mother glanced at him, she saw a tender pride s
ing into the expression of those clear blue eyes she
loved so long. She caught its meaning when he said

"If I should ever have a boy of my own, I shoul
want him to think I wasn't ready to fight for
flag."

His mother turned and looked at him, with a question full in her eyes, and he answered, softly:

"Perhaps—about New Year's."

In an instant she took his wife into her inmost heart.

"Then you must not enlist, Robert. It would be cruel. Do you stay by that little wife of yours, and take good care of her, for a year yet. If the country needs you, after that, go, and God bless you, dear!"

Robert smiled.

"You are quite sure?"

"Quite."

"Well, I always found it was best to mind you. There's one comfort about it—armies must have rations, and the farms are just as necessary as the arsenals."

At the same moment a long talk in the study was coming to an end. Donald had been urging his father to let him leave college at once and go into the army. Mr. Cameron was summing up the argument on his side by saying:

"I want you to do your duty towards the country, my son, but the soldiers she wants are older men than you." Donald opened his lips to protest that he was as strong as any man needed to be; but his father had heard that before, and went on: "You are well and strong, and I thank God for it; but no young man at your age has the power of endurance he will have later, and endurance is quite as necessary as force, to a soldier. If the Government can put down the rebellion in a year, such volunteers as you are not needed; if the war is not through by that time, you will be worth much more as a soldier then than now."

Donald looked unsatisfied still.

"I should be ashamed all my life if the war w finished without my firing one shot for the old flag."

"Working away at your regular college duties is not brilliant service as fighting, to be sure," his father replie "but if what you wish is to be the most useful citiz you can, I believe that is the thing for you to do. you were to break off your course of study at this poi and serve in the army till the war is done, I do not lieve you would ever have the power for good that will if you go on—finish this work undertaken—and th if occasion demands, volunteer."

There was a moment's thoughtful silence.

"I would not wish to control you about it, my Take counsel of God, and do what you think right; I have given you my judgment. There is no ques in my mind that it would be unwise for you to enlis present."

He sat leaning a little forward, resting his hand on knee, looking earnestly into his son's eyes as he it. The two faces, over against each other, were strik in their likeness and their unlikeness one to the ot The younger had a tapering contour, larger eyes, an curling upper lip of its own, but the complexion and general cast of features were the same in both; the ma of iron grey hair were not less soft and thick than th of dark brown; the eyes of the father looked bla only because they were deeper set and shaded by hea brows than the son's; the one face was full of s strength, the other mobile with imagination and feel Both were full of noble expression now.

"No doubt you are right, father," said Donald, as rose and walked to the door, "but if I am needed, I ready; that's all."

After one week together, which seemed to them, afterwards, like the "bright, consummate flower" of their home happiness, the family circle was broken by Robert's departure.

"Robert seems to be making a strong, useful man," said the father to the mother, as he covered the coals in the sitting-room stove, the night after he had gone. "I think he has been remarkably successful, too, for the time he has been West."

"Mrs. Perley was remarking how well he appears," said the mother, who was so conscious of being proud of him that she was a little shy of saying all she thought, even to her husband. "She says there is a kind of unpretending self-respect along with that frank, friendly way of his, that makes every one else respect as well as like him."

"That comes, in part, from having the right business and the right wife—the two prime requisites for a man's success in life, outside of his own soul."

Mrs. Cameron was too wise and too delicate to refer to the pain the son's choice of business had cost his father; but she inwardly smiled, and laid up the saying in her heart, to tell Robert whenever she should see him again.

XVI.

DONALD IN THE FOG.

THE two brothers had been constantly together during the week; their very difference of temperament seemed to make them more delightful to each other; so it was not till Robert was gone that Theodora found opportunity for one of her old talks with Donald. She was well pleased, the next morning, when they were sent off together on a "butter hunt" in the "Hardscrabble neighborhood." Hannibal, though past his youth, pulled up the hills as pluckily as ever, while the brother and sister talked over a score of things which they had been saving to tell each other.

"Would you go back to Wheeling, or not?" asked Theodora.

"Lay the case before me in your most lucid style, and I will favor you with my wisdom," answered Donald, snatching a twig from a birch they were passing, and biting off the bark for the sake of old times, when he liked it.

"*Pro*," commenced Theodora. "I want the money. Secondly, I like the Torringtons, and I enjoy my work. Thirdly, they want me to come back, very much; and they have been so kind to me, that I don't like to refuse them.

"*Con.* Mr. and Mrs. Torrington are thoroughbred Southerners—he from old Virginia and she from South Carolina. They try to be considerate of me, and I of them; but we can't speak out, on either side, without

coming point blank against each other. You know I never was remarkable for prudence in speaking my mind; and in a thing like this, that I feel through and through me, it seems sometimes as if it was as much as my life was worth to hold in."

"Don't go back, if there's any danger of exploding—don't!" said Donald, with an air of alarm.

"I go up to uncle's, when I am near that. There I can blow off steam to my heart's content. It is really amusing to see Uncle Graham's division of mind between his old friendship for Mr. Torrington and his disgust at his secession principles. I shouldn't dare have them meet—uncle is too uncompromising and outspoken. Mr. Torrington is more reserved, but just as intense on his side—just as sure he is right."

"It's a mystery to me," said Donald, "that they have not put you out, before this, for a pestilent Abolitionist firebrand."

"Why, you have no idea how cool and self-controlled I have grown. I am a wonder to myself. Didn't I write you of a little talk that happened, soon after I went there, which called out my anti-slavery notions? I freed my mind then, once for all, and I resolved I never would refer to it again, if I could help it, while I was in the family. Mrs. Torrington was pretty thoroughly excited, as well as I; but we both held on to our temper, and really liked each other none the less for it, perhaps."

"I shouldn't want to feel that I was muzzled."

"I don't. I said, plainly and honestly, just what I thought. Only, when your principles come down on good, conscientious, delightful people whom you are talking with, you can't lay them down with quite such unmitigated severity, you know."

"General principles go on swimmingly till they get mixed up with particular cases," said Donald, switching the raspberry bushes by the roadside. "You could blaze away with unembarrassed ardor when your slave-holding sinners were a thousand miles away; but now you have them at short range, you cool off. I am afraid you are getting demoralized."

"No, I am not; I think of slavery just as I always did. I hate it more than ever, now I see it is the wedge that threatens to split the nation; but I do see, as I didn't use to, how people who are really just and honorable and religious, in every other respect, can be so possessed with pro-slavery prejudices and traditions as not to see that it is cruel or unjust or unchristian; and I think, so long as I am a member of their household, it is not courtesy to keep bringing up a subject which we cannot discuss without wounding each other."

"So far, you have made a gain, I believe. The fact is, Theodora, we have been educated in such positive opinions of right and wrong, true and false, that we are in danger of seeing only one side of things."

"I believe I would almost rather see only one side,' the sister exclaimed. "It is such a damper of your enthusiasm, or your righteous indignation, to take into account everything that might be said on the other side."

"There you are! That's you, all over!" said Donald looking around at her, with a short laugh. "It is your dearest luxury to put the whole of yourself into whatever you feel. But, don't you see, you will have to get into some other world than this before that will apply? There is nobody you can admire without some discount—nobody you can have the satisfaction of hating without any compunction—no case that circumstances won't alter—no

truth so certain that more light may not show it an untruth."

Theodora's face clouded; but her brother, not caring to follow the line of thought any farther, forestalled her reply by saying:

"To return to the question: to go or not to go; I say go, if you can be happy there; stay if you can't. The money is a good thing—you have made pleasant friends, they like your singing, and your teaching; Uncle Graham's is a second home to you. But if it makes you uncomfortable to live with those you differ from, don't do it. We can find some other place for you, and if you don't get quite so good pay, you can take it out in hurrahing for the stars and stripes."

Theodora laughed and said, "That reminds me; a day or two after we heard of the 'Star of the West' being fired on, Mrs. Torrington and I were going along the street, and came to a place where some Unionist was running up a new flag in front of his house. It seems the halyards had broken, and he had left the flag trailing in a pile across the side-walk, while he went for a new cord. I wouldn't step on it, so I caught it up in my arms, and before I knew it, I'd kissed it—"

"Theatrical!"

"No, it wasn't!" she protested, blushing; "I didn't 'go to'—I took myself by surprise; nobody saw me but Mrs. Torrington. I was so angry and grieved that Americans *could* fire on the American flag, that I couldn't help giving the glorious old thing a hug and a kiss when I got it in my arms."

"It is to be hoped the sidewalk was reasonably clean."

"You bad boy!" giving his shoulder a little push. "I wish I hadn't told you a thing about it; but what made

me was, that Mrs. Torrington and I had a grand fight after it; we found Pelham Bell at the house when we came home, and she told him about it, making fun of me. I defended myself, jokingly, at first, but presently I made some thrust at South Carolina for insulting the flag; that roused her, and then we had it, hot and heavy, on both sides. Bell sat by, and threw in a torpedo whenever we showed any signs of peace. I scolded him for it afterwards, but he said we were like the North and South, incarnate, and he was anxious to see which would come out ahead so as to know on which side to enlist. But it was awful. She feels for the honor of South Carolina to the very marrow of her bones, just as I feel for The Country. I resolved I would not be provoked into another such dispute with her, come what would, for I love her, and don't want to lose her."

"What kind of a chap is this Bell? Seems to me, you see a good deal of him."

"I do; he is very intimate at the Torringtons—always has been."

"No more so since you went there, I suppose?" remarked Donald, looking her quizzically in the face.

"How can I tell? I wasn't there before. He doesn't seem to have any particular aversion to finding me there," she answered, laughing.

"Well, what is he?"

"He is a splendid-looking man; so tall, that it seems like an affront to any ordinary man for him to stand beside him—and still so finely proportioned, that you don't think of his being so remarkably tall, if you just see him by himself."

"What else?"

"He knows how to be the politest man I ever saw!"

"Knows *how* to be?"

"Yes, he is too lazy to practice it all the time. But you should see him on his great white horse! He is an elegant rider. Oh, what rides we have had out to uncle's! But that's all over. He has gone into the Union army; but, as I have told him, he isn't fighting for the Government, he is fighting for his horse. I really don't think he would have turned his hand, which side should beat, till a few weeks ago, he happened to be down in Kanawha County, and one of Gen. Wise's officers set his eyes on Di Vernon, and straightway she was seized as belonging to a Union man. Bell came home in a towering passion, and the very next day took a lieutenant's commission in the Union army. Gen. Blank took him for an aide soon after."

"Isn't there anything to him except dimensions and a horse?"

"Yes; he is generous to a fault; loves and hates without any qualifications. Mr. Torrington says, when he chooses to work, no young man can compete with him; but he is careless unless a case happens to interest him. He studied with Mr. Torrington, and was admitted to the bar two years ago. Uncle thinks well of him because he comes of good blood, the Pelhams and the Bells. His father's family are strong in the region. They all call him 'Bell,' even his own sisters, as if it were his given name."

One remark of Donald's, in this talk, was the clue to much of his recent thinking, as his sister found in many other conversations that Summer. "No truth so certain but that more light may show it an untruth."

When religious unbelief enters a mind through the lusts of the flesh, it is welcome, as the finding a flaw in

his master's title would be to a slave; habits rebou from galling restraint; the man makes haste to use h new license, and ever after he will show a bitterness scoffing hatred towards the faith from which he h broken. But when a serious doubt of Christianity i vades a soul which has been wont to yield Jesus Chri the loyalty of love, it brings dismay and desolation; makes the richest treasure of life, a cheat; the dearest all friends, a phantom. A strong Christian charac cannot be quickly undermined; the heart will cher loyalty to its King long after the mind begins to deb his right to reign, but it will ache with distrust.

From this wretched experience, Donald had been s fering. He had not chafed under the checks of a Pu tan training—not even in college; the purity of his o tastes had abetted it. A certain refinement of mo tone, together with his decided intellectual bent, se rated him, without an effort, from the "fast men" of class. It was no desire for an easier law of conscie which whispered to him new doubts of his ances faith; but at the same time that he lost, with his ho life, much that made the Gospel a living reality; a gr range of new reading was opened to him; argume against Christianity which he had met in works wh they were cited to be controverted, he now found for first time, not with conviction, in the very words of men who first urged them. He was often in debate w friends who held opposite religious opinions not stoutly than he his. The consciousness that his mi heart, and life had been struck through with the defi theology and code of duty, which his parents had tau him, made him jealous of himself, lest he should be capable of an unbiased search for truth.

The questions which challenged him struck at the very roots of his belief. He felt that he must hold in abeyance that love for Christ which he had sacredly fostered, while he went back to the beginning to investigate the proof that He was indeed a Saviour. He forgot that, in spiritual things, the reason can no more spare the heart than the chemist can spare heat—that the intuitions we snatch when the soul is intensely awake, and truth is flashed upon it through the electric air of feeling, are not less to be respected than the conclusions we labor for, piecing together proofs and weighing probabilities, and so he ruled out of evidence much which might have shed light on his perplexities. Severed thus from his heavenly Guide, he wandered into regions that were very dark and chill—the foundations seemed to have given way beneath him, and life had lost its meaning. Yet no strange thing had happened unto him. He was but one of thousands struggling through a passage of life, full of peril and of pain, which may prove the death-agony of the soul or the birth-pang to a higher life. Well, it is not for every one who, like young Cameron, brings to that trial a character stanch with Christian principle, a heart full of Christian sympathies, a memory which cannot turn to the dearest scenes of childhood without seeing the benign presence of the Redeemer in the midst of the beloved household.

> "Like a sick child that knoweth not
> His mother while she blesses,"

he is held from harm by those very arms of faith he is striving to fling from him.

Once or twice after coming home, Donald fell into discussion with his father on some of the questions which were

troubling him, but with so little satisfaction on either side that they mutually avoided it afterwards. Mr Cameron was accounted an uncommonly clear, candid logical reasoner; but to find this son of his attacking doctrines which he had carefully expounded to him in childhood, not only grieved—it displeased him. It seemed to him the boy must be perverse in refusing to be convinced by what was, to him, irresistible proof. He felt it to deeply and painfully to argue about it. He recommended to his son certain controversial works in his library, and he often laid the case before God with strong supplication. Whence this new scepticism had sprung, and whither it might lead, were questions that filled him with solicitude. he feared it might have come from some letting down of morality which was hidden from him. Donald suspected this suspicion, and was hurt by it; but with that strange pride we have in being unjustly judged, took not the slightest pains to relieve the unfounded fear. He, on his part, thought his father unwilling to allow to unbelief their due, either as to sincerity or force of argument. this new undertone of dissonance between them marred somewhat the sweetness of the Summer days.

With his mother, Donald instinctively avoided any allusion to his religious doubts. He did not wish to shock her, nor to be harrassed in his inquiries by her anxiety. One day, as the family were in a lively debate on some subject—perhaps it was "Woman's Sphere"—Miriam quoted on her side a text from one of the Epistles.

"That is Paul's opinion," remarked Donald, indifferently.

"And isn't it the Word of God?" asked his mother, looking up at him earnestly.

He met her eyes for a moment, answered gently, "Perhaps," and plunged into the discussion again, so as to shun any further talk about it. Later in the day, however, when she met him alone, she laid her hands on his shoulders and looked up into his face, saying:

"You don't doubt the Bible, my child?"

"You needn't worry about me, mother," was his answer.

She was unsatisfied, and waited for him to say more; but he did not. She stroked his cheek, and said, solemnly:

"I would rather see my son die than become an infidel."

Donald had not thought of that word in connection with his scepticism; he was melted to hear himself spoken of so mournfully, and without returning her caressing touch, he turned away, saying, with some impatience:

"Why, mother, one would think I was a young Voltaire! You needn't be alarmed about me."

Youth is often cruel to the tenderness that yearns over it, when it does not mean to be. He felt her sad eyes following him as he went out, and he felt them afterwards wherever he wandered in that weary quest for truth.

It was with Theodora that he talked most freely. It was natural to share with her whatever was in his thoughts, and then he felt that her faith in him was too strong to be shaken; she would expect nothing but the best of and for him. In the many talks they had, in their long morning drives, or in the hushed Sunday afternoons, sitting in his chamber window, looking out towards the mountains, she often reassured his reliance on the Bible

as a revelation, and on Christ as a Saviour. Sometimes it was by a trenchant argument—oftener, by her own ardent faith. He had no fear of harming her, she seemed so sure. It would have pained him if he had foreseen how some of the doubts he first suggested to her would urge their way into her mind, and lurk there to start up and trouble her when she was far from him. Still she was in a better condition to combat them than he. She was keeping closer to the "Great Shepherd of the sheep," and she was mingling more freely with real life—the best commentary on the Bible. On the whole, it was a good, rather than an evil to her, that she was driven to search the foundations of her faith as never before. She did it with constant prayer to the Father of her spirit—the God of all truth—and it ended in a more intelligent and independent belief for herself, along with a broader and gentler liberality towards the differing faith of others.

Every afternoon, the family were sure to be together in the sitting-room, when the messenger came back from the post-office. That was the Summer that the city daily newspapers began to find their way to every little village of the interior. The coming of the mail was the great event of the day to everybody—from the row of loafing sovereigns perched along the steps of the post-office, squirting tobacco-juice and political wisdom into the street, to the housewife in the loneliest farm-house on the hills.

The good-natured, well-fed North, which had started up, amazed, like a sleepy giant, at the first attack, and struck a few blundering blows, thoroughly roused by finding himself beaten, was kindling in spirit, hardening his sinews, and tightening his harness for effectual war. The people, taking it for granted that "great times create great men," were on the lookout for their hero. The day

after the defeat of Bull Run, they began a long and costly series of experiments in the hope of finding him, inflating generals to gods, only to see them collapse to men of ordinary size. They had it to learn, and teach to the world, that human nature is equal to its own emergencies —that mere honesty, sense, and will can lead a nation of freemen safely through a mighty crisis. Doubtless that ideal genius, for whom they vainly watched, might have saved them time, and blood, and money; but, in the meanwhile, they patiently taxed themselves the needed millions, offered their blood without stint, and bided their time.

By the time the woodbine over the porch was crimsoned, only two of the children were going in and out at the parsonage door. Faith and Jessie were still at home, both in school. Faith was pursuing that desultory but vigorous kind of education which is to be had at our old-fashioned academies in the "fresh-water towns" of New England, where Latin and mathematics are the main staples, Greek and natural sciences the side dishes, and a little French, "after the scale of Stratford atte Bowe," all the dessert. Perhaps for her it was, after all, the best system. In small classes, without any definite course of study, her stubborn energy was free to dig away at a difficulty for days without being forestalled by explanations. Her scholarship lacked breadth, proportion, and grace, but it had a depth, independence, and truthfulness that accorded well with her own character. A country academy is generally taught by some young man just through college, earning enough to go through a professional school, and its worth is in exact ratio to his. Fortunately for Faith, her young teacher had a mind well able to guide and quicken hers.

As for Jessie, she was too lazy to be a scholar. She loved to read and to dream much better than to work. Many an evening, as the two sisters sat at the same table, while Faith was hunting down a problem in Trigonometry, or following up the tangled clue of a sentence in Livy, Jessie sat with her books before her, but her head resting on the hand buried in her curls, and her dreamy eyes fixed on the shaded light, while her mind floated down the stream of some romantic reverie. As the mother, on the opposite side of the table, with her book and basket of mending, looked at the two, she often wished she could equalize the amount of will between them—Jessie needed more, and Faith would go through the world more comfortably with less.

Miriam, meanwhile, was living a happy, satisfying life at Downington; teaching, and studying that she might teach well, kept up a steady, intellectual growth and to this she was adding more of culture than she was conscious of, from her reading, from the society of cultivated people. Care for her pupils kept her life earnest and her heart humbly prayerful. So her soul had no meagre income; as for its outgo—if "character is the only real thing in this world," and life is worth living in proportion as it tells upon character, Miriam Cameron's life was rich in value. She was a power in many souls just at the time when boys and girls were crystalizing into men and women. She was young enough to be one of them, old enough to be beyond them, and their admiring love for her went far to form their ideals, their purpose in life, and to win them to Him she called Master and Lord. School seemed to come nearer to the general life now that the country was in danger. Fathers, brothers, lovers in the army, gave the daily news intense interest

am felt it one of her pleasantest duties to en-
nd guide the fiery patriotism of the young creat-
und her. Comfort-bags put worsted work to
nd the girls were never so happy as in filling a
box with the work of their hands, unless it was
ıg the rudely-written, ill-spelled but gallant and
letters that came in return.

d, like most college boys of the time, was work-
ıis surplus zeal in military drill. The manual of
s studied quite as zealously as any text-book of
ɜe, and impatient spirits quieted themselves with
ght that they were making ready to be heroes.

XVII.

TOWN-MEETING, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY, in his "Arcadia," represents two knightly heroes who have been through danger and exploits in loving fellowship, having been separated by a great shipwreck, meeting in single combat, unknown to each other in their strange armor, as the champions of opposing armies.

"And so they began a fight which was so much inferior to the battle in noise and number as it was surpassing it in bravery, and, as it were, delightful terribleness. Their courage was guided with skill, and their skill was armed with courage, neither did their hardness darken their wit, nor their wit cool their hardness; both valiant, as men despising death, both confident as men unwonted to be overcome—their feet steady, their hands diligent, their eyes watchful and their hearts resolute."

So did the two great brother armies of the Republic wrestle with each other through the early Summer of 1862. Trembling and hoping, the nation watched to see one or the other go down; but fierce assault and stubborn repulse seemed to bring the end no nearer. They fell apart, panting and bleeding, after an awfully memorable week, in which they fought six battles, making every night a forced march more dreadful than a battle. Each had conquered, each had been conquered, and neither was vanquished. All the ground they had trampled over, from the Chickahominy to the James, was crying with

brothers' blood, and Malvern Hill, where the Confederate army had been finally repulsed, was piled with ghastly dead. The same papers which carried over the North the bulletins of that hard-won victory, carried also the call for three hundred thousand men. State Governors echoed the summons, and in a few days, like villages and cities all over the North, Rockbridge had called a meeting of citizens to consider and act upon it.

Colonel Welch was chosen chairman, not because he was an ardent Unionist, but because his townsmen wished to make him one. His well-wadded front and prancing charger had never confronted anything more terrific than the brass band of the muster-field, but he wore his title with an air of imposing consequence.

He rose, planted one foot forward, thrust his thumbs into the arm-holes of his waistcoat, spread his fat fingers over the broad expanse, and opened the meeting by reminding his fellow-citizens that they were called to deliberate upon the President's proclamation, and determine whether it was expedient to take any measures in response to it.

While the chairman was slowly re-seating himself, Mr. Hoyt, a wide-awake young merchant, sprang to his feet, and set the tune in a different key, by saying, that there was no question as to whether Vermont was ready to furnish her quota of the three hundred thousand, or whether Rockbridge was ready to send her share of Vermont's quota. The only things to be decided were: who were the men?—what was the town willing to do for them?

As the clapping which approved his speech subsided, Mr. Blunt, the blacksmith, rose on the right of the platform, and turned towards the audience. He was a broad-shouldered, swarthy man, with a bristling palisade of

iron-grey hair over his square forehead and shaggy brows. He had been reading a newspaper up to th moment. He looked over his spectacles, and fixe attention of the crowd by the silent gaze of his pie eyes before he began to speak.

"Vermont is ready to do her part, and Rockbric ready to do her part," he said. "Our boys are will go, and we are willing to back them up. We hav good American blood here, and hard-earned dollar that we are willing to give for the country; but, citizens, we ha'n't got any to waste. We can give u children, if it's necessary to save the nation; but w willing to see 'em pass through the fire to Moloch!

Mr. Blunt's voice took on a tone of fierce grief, hush came over the town-meeting. Every one th of his two sons. One, shot in that wonderful but less feat of valor at Lee's Mills, where Green Mo boys charged through water breast-high, under a storm of bullets, and carried the enemy's works, t them an hour; the other—a hardy boy, never sick life before—languishing with malarial fever at House.

"I've studied the map," he went on, "and I've st the newspapers, and I can't make it out no othe but what there's been an awful blunder. Our men fought like lions, and worked like beavers. Let m to ye what 'Fighting Joe' says about 'em in his of this last battle." He adjusted his spectacles, t his newspaper towards the light, and read laboriousl proudly:

"'The brave officers and men whose honor and w were confided to my care, under all their toils, hard and privations, have evinced a cheerfulness, obed

fortitude, and heroism which will never fail to command the gratitude, reverence, and admiration of their chief.'

"Yes, and what has it all amounted to?"—peering ominously over his spectacles. "What have we to show for the hund'ed thousand men we have lost in this campaign? Jest changin' base from the river to the swamp, and the swamp to the river—the enemy strengthenin' his fortifications all the while. They git within four miles of Richmond, and they are marched off again. Here—last Tuesday, they won a great victory at Malvern Hill; and what do they do after it? Retreat! Retreat, with some of the best generals in the service protesting against it. Their commander waits till it rains, then waits till it dries; and he will wait till our brave boys are all killed with these hungry marches and deadly swamps and useless battles, without takin' Richmond. I say, the country ought to demand a change in the Lieutenant-General before it gives the three hundred thousand recruits. I tell ye, friends, it's one thing to give your children's blood to save the nation, and another thing to see it spilt for nothin'. This kind of procrastinatin' caution is the worst kind of rashness."

The blacksmith spoke with intense conviction, and his words struck home to a secret misgiving in the minds of his hearers. But he had hardly taken his seat when a "Mr. Chairman" was heard from the back part of the hall. Every one looked around, and saw a young man, under medium size, in the smoke-blue uniform. His thin face was thoroughly tanned, and he leaned on a crutch as he spoke. People whispered to each other that it was Jones, the carpenter, at home on furlough.

"Mr. Chairman," he said, "I'm not used to making speeches; but there's not a soldier in the Army of the

Potomac that could sit silent and hear such flings at our General. We know him, sir, and we believe in him, and we are ready to follow him till we drop in our tracks. It is easy enough to stay here and cry 'On to Richmond!' but I can tell you it is another thing to do it. Our General is too good a friend to his soldiers to throw away their lives, undertaking impossibilities. When the right time comes, you will see him carry everything before him. Let him have all the men he needs. It's not a pleasant feeling, I can tell you, to go into battle and know you haven't a good wall of reserves behind you.

"One thing you may be sure of, Mr. Chairman: the Army of the Potomac won't thank the country to stand haggling about degrading the commander they near about worship, instead of sending them reinforcements."

The young soldier sat down, trembling as he never trembled before the enemy's batteries; and his short speech, delivered with the homely force of a man who speaks because he cannot keep silence, told upon his audience. Still, there was a painful suspicion, the growth of weeks, that the General in command was unworthy of the enthusiastic faith of his army.

'Squire Hughes, who spoke next, tried to relieve this distrust by reminding his townsmen that the commander-in-chief of the army and navy was the President, who was known to be continually urging them forward. He loved the country as well as any of them, and was in a better position to judge what was best. Could they not trust him?

His cheerful, confident words, spoken with the clear utterance of a cultivated man, had an evident effect. The people of Rockbridge, like millions of their loyal countrymen, were learning to rely more and more on

that great, true heart at the centre of their government. The President would see what was right; the President would do what was best.

Mr. Hughes had hardly seated himself before 'Squire Fenton, the other lawyer of the village, was bowing to the chairman. He was as good a specimen of the florid pompous, as Col. Welch of the stately pompous. The hair seemed to have settled from the top of his head to the lower part of his face, where it made quite a fine show. The shining dome above was diversified by a few lines of hair coaxed up from the side locks, and trained across as a concession to the popular prejudice in favor of hair on the crown. His figure was growing somewhat portly, but had by no means given up pretensions to elegance. He thrust his fingers into his closely-buttoned coat, put the other hand, holding his shiny hat, behind him, and began:

He deplored the fratricidal strife. He dwelt upon the horror it was exciting throughout the European world. He apprehended the immediate recognition, by England, of the Southern Confederacy. He could not blame our young countrymen if they hesitated to offer themselves for immolation in this scene of unnatural slaughter. He opined that every rational citizen must secretly regret that the seceding States had not been let alone, as they desired. For one, he was not ashamed to espouse the unpopular side. Nothing should intimidate him in performing the most painful and responsible duty a friend of his country is ever called upon to discharge, namely, opposing himself to the popular infatuation of his fellow-citizens.

It did require some courage to offer such a speech in a Vermont town-meeting, in those days. It roused the

whole assembly as no appeal to arms could have done. Men who never "made remarks" before, sprang to their feet, and flung out sentences hard with sense, warm with heart, sharp with wit.

The loyalty of a republic is a loyalty to ideas; and the debates of an American mass-meeting go to the foundation principles of freedom and order.

As they showed, in this homely, forcible way, that the essential element of a democratic government was at stake —that the very life of the nation was in peril—they wrought each other to a fervor of patriotism.

Resolutions of fidelity to the Union, and of praise to the soldiers in the field were passed. The bounty to be given volunteers was fixed. The immediate demand was for men to fill up the regiments wasted by battle and disease. All that remained was to find these recruits.

The villages of Vermont and New Hampshire were not overrun with young men.

Boys who have a fortune to seek, see a more hopeful chance of finding it in the cities, or the West. Rockbridge had responded nobly to the first call for volunteers, and now, who was there to go? It was so inconvenient for everybody, that everybody thought somebody else could surely go better than he. There was a trying struggle as men looked around on their neighbors. The faces of anxious mothers, of feeble wives, of little children, rose before them, so that it was difficult to see what ought to be done.

Colonel Welch announced, with frigid deliberation, that if there was no other business before the meeting, opportunity would now be offered for persons to present their names as volunteers, if any desired to do so. There was a moment of oppressive silence.

It was a relief when Mr. Cameron rose and came forward on the platform. He was a natural leader. The parish he had counselled and comforted for twenty-five years, had learned to trust his judgment. Even men who hated all ministers, and who called him stiff and stern, believed in his well-tried integrity and sense. With his first words, every one settled down as if things were likely to go right.

No eloquence is so effective as that which simply lends a human voice to a great crisis. Nothing inspires men like the consciousness that they are acting on the same plan with the heroes of all ages. In a few clear, cogent sentences, Mr. Cameron applied truths, broad as mankind and old as time, to the business before this particular town-meeting, and every heart was thrilled as by a trumpet-call. He was an orator of few gestures and few metaphors; but the genuine and lofty feeling which burns in a powerful eye, fills the tones of a manly voice, and gives a self-forgetting dignity to the altitudes of a stalwart form, can make itself felt without embellishments. As he spoke, the duty of the citizens rose to a glorious privilege. Harry Blunt took his place beside Leonidas, and the rest of them. Hearts beat high with the noble passion of patriotism. It seemed fitting to die for one's country.

When he closed, there ran through the room that rustle and sigh which first show an audience how fixed in attention they have been. At the same moment, a quick, energetic step was heard, coming up the aisle.

Theodora, who was sitting near the platform, turned her head at the sound. People were standing so that she could not see. Her heart stood still to listen; it could not be——. She was aware of a stir and sensation creep-

ing from the back to the front of the room, as that footstep came nearer. Yes, it *is!* Donald steps out into the open space, says, "Put me down, Colonel," and is off again.

The old hall rang with applause. Miriam smothered a little groan. Theodora's heart swells as if it would burst with a proud tenderness. Her father's eyes meet hers with kindred feeling. Donald is standing where they can see him now, but he will not look at them.

Here comes another volunteer, who has two brothers already in the field. He is not of age. His father rises to say, "I had hoped to keep this boy at home, but if the country needs him, he must follow his brothers." He sits down amid the loud cheers of the men and the silent blessings of the women.

From the back of the room, came the name "Richard F. Larabee." Cheers again, but under the applause, quick sympathy for the young wife with her flock of babies. This feeling is so strong that Mr. Flanigan, the shoemaker, delivers a short speech to the effect that he will be personally responsible that no young family left behind by a Rockbridge volunteer shall lack for a father's care. Every one knew that Mr. Flanigan's word was as good as his bond; neither being good for anything. Larabee shrugged his shoulders, but Dea. Perley, who said nothing, gave him a grip of the hand which made him sure that whatever a generous and faithful neighbor could do, would be done for Janet and the children.

Recruiting went on bravely. Here is a reckless fellow who has been through wild adventures in California and Nevada. "He will make a daring soldier," they say. Then comes a sturdy, honest young man, brown with work on his father's farm. "There's a boy that won't

, whatever they give him to do," one neighbor mut-
o another.
:. Foss, who employs twenty or thirty "hands" in
ıill, makes a speech, regretting that he is too old to
imself, but promising his employees that if any of
ı wish to enlist, their places shall be guaranteed them
ı they come back. Before the cheers which greet
announcement die away, four of the mill men come
ard. When thirty names are enrolled, it is announced
a recruiting office will be open in that place for a
k, and the meeting breaks up.
heodora saw old friends crowding around Donald, but
could not bear to be separated from him any longer.
ckly and quietly she made her way to his side. Mr.
ves had him by the hand, so she took his left arm
ıout speaking. He looked down to see who it was,
led, pressed her hand closely to his side, and went on
ening to his rough, old friend.
If it wa' n't for this plaguey old rheumatiz," Mr.
ıves was saying, "I 'd go along with ye, old as I be.
ı 'n I enlisted together once, didn't we! You 've ben
ood soldier, too; I've marked ye. It's helped me
ny a time, thinking of my comrad. Wal, good luck
ye, my boy. Take care of yerself and don't let them
els hit ye, if you can help it."
Mr. Fenton stepped up, and bowing low to Miss Theo-
a, bestowed his hand with a flourish, on the young
unteer.
'Good-evening, good-evening, Mr. Cameron. I was
t aware that you were in town. Not vacation yet?"
Donald explained that a class-mate from the town
ove, who was going to drive home, had invited him to
me along, and the little excursion was almost as much

a surprise to himself as his friends. Seeing the Town Hall lighted, he had stopped to see what was going on.

"Your father was not apprised, then, of your arrival?"

"No, sir," the young man answered, curtly, for the way the questioner tipped his wide face with its sandy trimmings on one side and thrust it forward, insinuated, "He would not have rallied recruits quite so zealously if he had known his son was before him."

Theodora, who had an antipathy for this gentleman, understood it so, and remarked rather haughtily:

"No, Mr. Fenton, it was a happy surprise for him to see his own son first to respond to his appeal."

"No doubt, Miss Cameron, no doubt," replied the lawyer, with two or three bows and a wave of the hand which held his well-brushed hat. "Very gratifying to you, Mr. Cameron, that your family are so much delighted to have you go. In fact," said he, with a French shrug, folding his arms so as to bring the hat to the foreground, "I do not know why they should not be. You will have very good pay, see a good deal of the country, and, I hope, not have much fighting to do."

"I don't know how that may be, sir," answered Donald, coolly. "I hope to do my duty."

The brother and sister made their way out slowly, speaking with old friends at every step. Miriam was waiting for her father, who was kept in consultation.

"Good-evening, Hattie," said Donald, to Mrs. Train, an old schoolmate who had married another old schoolmate. "Where's Will?"

"Gone," said she, in an under-tone. "I thank my stars I had the sense to make him go. It was all I could do to keep him from enlisting the first time, and I haven't slept three weeks since I saw this call for troops. I beg-

ged, and I coaxed, and I cried. If you 'll believe it," she was talking in emphatic whispers behind her fan, looking up at Donald with eyes which he used to think bewitching when he was sixteen—"if you will believe it, I actually went down on my knees to that fellow before I could persuade him that he must have business in Canada."

She ended with a tragic gesture, and began to fan herself violently.

"I sha'n't see him, then, before I go?"

"Well, I hope indeed you won't! Dear me! If Will knew you were going, Donald Cameron, there would be no keeping him. I think it is really unkind of him to think of going. Why, I should be frightened into fits. I am always nervous as a witch if he stays at the store half an hour later than usual."

"What do you think of Mrs. Larabee?" asked Theodora.

"Oh, I don't understand these cold-blooded people," said Hattie, tossing her pretty head. "She encourages him to go, they say. People are so different. Good-night."

"People *are* different," said Theodora, as she disappeared in the crowd. "There's Hattie Train at home with her father and mother, without a care in the world, worrying her husband down to act like a coward, and there's Mrs. Larabee with her four little bits of children, and nobody but him to depend upon, cheering her husband on."

"Hattie is very fond of Will," remarked Donald, with an extenuating recollection of the bright eyes.

"Fond enough to cajole him into doing anything she wants, but not fond enough to give way to his wishes or

his duty. I don't believe she loves him as much in a yea as Mrs. Larabee loves her husband in one day. It isn' Will she thinks of; it's herself. He mustn't do what h thinks right and honorable, because it would make her s nervous!"

They had reached the Larabees, who stood waiting fo them.

"Hullo, Donald!"

"How are you, Larrabee?"

The young men grasped each other's hands with a new feeling of comradeship, while the sister and the wife looked each other in the eyes with sympathy. They had not known each other very well. Perhaps it is true, as Western people allege, that New England villages lack sociability; but there is a certain liking which will flourish well without much sociability. One neighbor thinks every time he sees another, "There is a life being wel lived; there is a person I could make a friend of." There is much of this feeling among people too busy with thei own work to give much time to each other, and it is quit as natural and helpful as friendliness which grows up fron much talking. Miriam used to say that Theodora carrie a divining-rod to find out heroes and heroines; and th woman had long been one of her heroines. She had ofte noticed the pleasant glances of perfect understanding b tween the husband and wife, the loving strength with whic the mother seemed to control her children, the bright i telligence of her unpretending remarks—this new bor found them all ready to be friends.

XVIII.

PREPARATIONS.

AT last the brother and sister were out in the fresh evening air, walking homeward.

"How is mother?" he asked.

"Well; poor mother!"

They both felt that his going would be a greater trial to her than anyone else.

It makes a vast difference whether one's imagination is naturally poised, so as to dip toward hope or fear. It was instinctive with Mrs. Cameron to expect the thing she dreaded. She had great faith, fortitude, and love, so that despite this temperament she was by no means a sad person. Theodora had more than the hopefulness of youth; she had that of constitution as well. In danger, she took it for granted that no harm would really happen. Both good and evil being hostile, she was confident of the good, with just as little effort of reason and will as her mother apprehended the evil.

For them to let Donald go to the war was an entirely different thing, dearly as they both loved him. Theodora saw him coming home a triumphant hero; she knew her mother's imagination would see him a mangled corpse.

"Faith wasn't there to-night, was she?"

"No; she and Jessie are spending a week at grandfather's."

"I wonder what they will say!"

"Faith will approve of it, because it is right; and Jessie, because it is romantic."

They had come now in sight of the parsonage.

"There's no light in the house, as I can see," remarked Donald.

"I presume mother is enjoying the moonlight. She is there alone, you know."

"Yes; I remember how the moonlight streams across that dear old sitting-room floor. It seems to me I can see some one in the window; yes, there's mother, in her rocking-chair, in her old place; bless her!"

Theodora lingered at the door to let her brother go in alone. She saw her mother start up, exclaiming, "Why, Donald!" in half-joyful, half-anxious surprise,—saw him kiss her, saying cheerily, yet with a strange tone in his voice:

"It's all right, mother. I'm neither expelled nor sick."

Then she kissed him again and hugged him, and then, still holding his hands, stepped back to look at him.

"You don't know how glad I am to see you, dear! How well you look! Why, what a man you have grown to be my little Don!"

He looked a man for any mother to be proud of, as he stood there, flooded with moonlight.

"Yes, mother; and I am ready to do a man's part; have just enlisted."

Without a word, she sank back into her chair. As the pale light fell upon her face, it looked as if years had passed over it in that minute.

Theodora stood in the shadow, trembling with sympathy for them both.

"Don't take it so, mother," begged Donald, getting down on one knee and putting his arm around her.

"Oh, my child, how can I let you go!" she groaned, with a look of despair.

"Why, mother, I should think you would want me to go! You would feel ashamed if no son of yours was willing to fight for his country."

"If you should be killed, my son?"

"What if I am? 'How can man die better—'." Theodora saw his face glowing with noble fire — his mother's pallid as under the shadow of death; she longed to have her say one word of God-speed to him. "What would my Revolutionary great-grandfather say to me if I wouldn't die to keep what he died to gain? I should expect my 'forbears' on both sides to rise from their honorable graves to reproach me."

She tried to return his smile, but it flickered and failed. She put her arms around his neck and laid her head on his shoulder, moaning:

"Oh, my child, if I could know you were trusting in your Saviour, I would not say one word."

The young man's face saddened. Here, then, was the great trouble. His mother dared not risk his soul! There was a moment's silence—then he said, in a grave, gentle voice:

"Shirking my duty can't be the way to the light, can it, mother?"

"No, dear; no."

Footsteps were heard on the doorstone; she raised her head and wiped away the tears. Mr. Cameron and the girls came in. The father shook his son's hand warmly, and laying the other hand on his shoulder, said: "God bless you, my boy; you have done right." There was a greeting all around, and an animated description of the town-meeting. Donald sat beside his mother, with her

hand in his, and she tried to enter into the conversation cheerfully.

"Can't we have prayers without bringing a light?" asked Theodora, when her father suggested, at last, that it was time.

"Yes, the moonlight is so beautiful. Miriam, can't you repeat the ninety-first Psalm?"

"'*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust—*';" as she went on, in her sweet, mellow voice, a holy peace seemed shed upon them all. The mother pressed her son's hand fervently, as they listened to the words: "'*His truth shall be thy shield and buckler,—a thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee;—He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*'"

As they knelt together, and the earnest prayer of the patriot father went up to the Lord of Hosts, no life seemed too costly to be offered for the imperilled country. Solemnly, he consecrated his son to the sacred cause, and the mother's heart grew strong. She gave him up to be a part of the great ransom. They entered into the mystery of fellowship with Him who spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, and felt the lofty joy of a great sacrifice for an unselfish end.

In thousands of homes this scene was being enacted; and this it was that, despite all the horrors and the crimes of war, raised the nation to a higher level. Men began to call again upon God, as they did when the country was young and weak. They felt, once more, that there are things more precious than money or life.

When eternal principles have been heaped with base compromises and poor, conventional codes of morality, till they are hidden from sight, they must burst through, and come to the surface, or the nation is lost. Let the upheaval come, though it be with earthquake and volcanic fires, burying these lying vanities under the red streams of war. A Republic is in a better case, suffering the loss of all things for the truth's sake, calling on God while it fights for existence, than in its sneering prosperity, when it holds honesty for a jest and God for a myth.

Recruiting went on successfully; many from the smaller villages, back from the river, reporting themselves at the Rockbridge office. The volunteers were ordered to report at Woodstock within ten days, whence, it was understood, they would be summoned to fill vacancies in the Vermont brigade, without waiting for a new regiment to be formed.

The day of Donald's enlistment was but one week before Dartmouth "Commencement."

This afforded the two days necessary for our young soldier to go back to Hanover, dispose of some effects, pack the rest, say good-bye to old friends and old haunts, and take his diploma. Both he and his class were glad that he could be with them at the last. Theodora went with him, and their father joined them the next day.

Was there ever a girl who did not enjoy her first going to "Commencement?"

Theodora had an agreeable consciousness that her brother took pride in introducing her to his friends, but it amused her to see how critically he glanced her over when she was to meet the men he liked, and how jealously he guarded her from the acquaintance of those he

disliked. One of these swung the gate and came up the flag-stone walk, as a group of young people were chatting under the trees in front of their pleasant boarding-place.

"There's Slocum, after an introduction, but he can't have it," said Donald, aside; so he went down to meet him. The gentleman who was entertaining Theodora, flattered himself she was greatly interested, but she was also listening, over her shoulder, to this conversation:

"How are you, Cameron? So you are going to the wars, they say."

"That's currently reported and commonly believed. Why don't you go, yourself, Slocum?"

"I have thought of it. In fact the governor has made some effort in that direction, but nothing turns up yet."

"His Excellency is trying to secure your services?" asked Donald, choosing to misunderstand.

"Oh, pshaw, you know what I mean. The old gentleman is trying to get me a commission. If he manages to secure anything worth while, I believe I'll take it. What kind of a berth have you? Why can't you speak a good word for a fellow?"

"I enlist, private."

"Aha! What in creation do you do that for?"

"Why shouldn't I?

"You will find it mighty rough."

"It isn't exactly a pleasure excursion."

"But you might get a commission—you have no en of friends. Everybody knows you are smart, and all that.

"I'll be a soldier before I am an officer—if I ever an There are enough capable men in our company who hav seen service to take the commissions, and they deserv them. I should feel like a fool, commanding soldiers."

"Older in practice, abler than myself."

"All right; that's very fine, no doubt; but I am troubled with no such scruples. I shall submit with a very good grace, if a commission is offered me."

"By the way, Cameron," he continued, in a lower tone, "who is that pretty girl talking with Cowden?" At which point the "pretty girl" suggested to Mr. Cowden that it would be cooler in the parlor.

Donald's oration had been written weeks before, and he had looked forward to giving it as a great event; but now it seemed nothing, under the shadow of the greater excitement beyond. That very fact gave a manliness and mastery to his delivery, which waked up the drowsy dignitaries on the platform, and hushed the coquetting girls in the gallery. The whisper which went around as he came on to the stand—"A volunteer"—made his audience his friends.

The speaking face, the rich voice, the graceful bearing, the fresh thoughts, and the expressive action of the young orator made pathetic appeal to his hearers, because they were gifts already offered for destruction, if need be, in the service of the flag. Theodora heard whispered near her: "Splendid fellow—one of the first scholars in the class—under marching orders"—and then a kind, shaky, old voice replying, "Dear boy! I hope he won't get hurt." She managed to catch a glimpse of the speaker—somebody's grandmother, and saw her wiping away a tear, lodged in the wrinkles under her eye. She felt like embracing that blessed old woman.

The sound of clapping was like a hailstorm on the roof, and bouquets fell thick and fast around him when he closed. He picked them up and turned his bright face with a bow of thanks to the crowd, looked up to the

gallery, and caught his sister's eyes, with a smile, as he went off.

How is it that one glimpse will print itself on the memory while a hundred other views of the same face, just as dear, and just as perfect, fade away? Donald as he was at that moment, radiant, his hands full of flowers, his beautiful brown eyes laughing up at her, tossing back his hair with the old, boyish movement—with a sense, in the background, of a sultry day, a great crowd in its best clothes, fluttering fans, air heavy with heliotropes and tube-roses, mixed with jockey-club, and all manner of made perfumes—this was the vivid picture that rose before Theodora, in after-years, at the beck of the faintest association.

When the "Commencement" party reached home, they found the household in excitement over this telegram:

"Good for Donald—doesn't get ahead of me—enlisted one day before him—have a splendid company.

"ROBERT CAMERON,
"Capt. Co. G, ——th Reg. Minn. Vols."

A letter from Robert followed this despatch, as soon s steam could overtake electricity, saying that he ha enlisted, himself, and raised a company as soon as th President's proclamation appeared; they had insisted tha he should be their captain. How heartily he entered o the command was easily seen from the affectionate prid with which he had already spoken of his men. His wif was brave and lovely, he said, and his boy—now si months old—showed a patriotic fondness for his father' sword. "They are secure of a home," he wrote, "but i anything happens to me, I want to leave them to you

who will love them for my sake—dear old folks at home."

"We count Jenny and the baby among our very own, though we never have seen them," his mother wrote back; "they shall never want for any love or help that Robert's father and mother can give, but the God of Battles forbid any harm should come to you, my dear boy."

Donald was busy enough in the few days that were left him. There was drill every morning, and good-bye calls every evening. He was a great favorite all over town, and the occasion brought out the good wishes of the men, the admiration of the small boys, the blessings of the old ladies, and the extremely friendly sentiments of the young girls. Then there were many little arrangements to make about things which he left behind, always with that dreadfully suggestive euphemism, "If anything should happen."

He was in fine spirits, meanwhile, overflowing with affectionate kindness to all the family.

"I wish Donald wouldn't be so good," said Miriam with tears in her eyes; "it goes to my heart to have him doing every little thing for us that we ever wanted him to, just as if he would never have another chance."

"Blessed old boy!" exclaimed Theodora; "I found this morning he had been and screwed on that hinge of my writing-desk that was troubling me yesterday. The misery of it is, there is so little we can do for him."

"I know it," said Faith; "I suppose, in fact, the fewer things he takes, the better off he is. We have put needles and thread and buttons enough, into that comfort-bag to keep the whole regiment in repair. Then there's your roll of lint, and old linen, Theodora, that Miriam cried

over so. I don't see what else we can do, unl ruffle his shirts and embroider his stockings wit white, and blue."

"Did you notice? He could hardly eat his to-day, because poor dear mother had taken so pains to get everything he likes."

"I'll tell you one thing we might do, girls," su Miriam; "let us have some new photographs tal him."

"Me too?" asked Jessie.

"Yes, all four of us. He ought to have bett nesses than those old ones."

"That's a good idea," said Theodora; "he m flattering remark about mine, I remember, that it as if I was trying to smile with horse-radish mouth."

"Do you know the soldiers are not to be un till they are mustered in, at Woodstock?" asked I

"Why, no!" "Who said so?" "What a sl exclaimed the rest.

Jessie was especially disgusted. "It won't se anything at all to have them go off in the cars wi every-day clothes on. I wouldn't give a cent to brother go to the war that way. I thought the go marching off in their fine uniforms, with flag and music playing—"

"With an aspect stern and high," went on Th "each casting a last fond look at the girl he leaves him. I am afraid you won't be able to get appropriate emotions, Jessie, without the pro circumstance."

While they were talking, the young voluntee home with their daily newspaper, and the fath

mother joined them to hear it read. After that the question came up in the family conclave, whether it was best for Theodora to return to Wheeling for another year. Her parents disliked to have her so near the debated ground, especially in a family of secession sympathies. Still she was very fond of them, ardent as she was in her own loyalty, and was anxious to go back.

West Virginia had declared itself independent of the seceding portion of the State, and Wheeling was a loyal city. Her uncle's house was a ready refuge for her in case of trouble. It was her darling enterprise to earn and save enough to buy a good piano. The second-hand instrument which had made her proud and happy when she was thirteen, had been falling in her esteem, until she termed it "the hand-organ" whenever she talked of it to Miriam. She did not want Faith and Jessie to lose all complacency in it, so long as they had to practice on it.

After the council had reached the decision that she might go if she chose to, and gone back to talking over the general news, she sat running over the keys of the old piano, and calculating how long before she could put its successor in its place. Suddenly she whirled around on the stool and remarked:

"If any of my relations should be so rash as to think of giving me a birth-day present—"

"How can she!" exclaimed Miriam, giving a graceful turn to the ribbon with which she was trimming Jessie's hat. "Who ever thought of giving her anything?"

"If anybody did before, they wouldn't be likely to after such a hint," said Faith.

"Entirely irrelevant and indelicate remarks, of course," said Donald, catching at the tail of Jessie's cat and mak-

ing an unexpected pause in its trot, as it passed him; "but then, she may as well finish, now she has begun."

Jessie took up the cat and stroked down its fur and its feelings without looking at it; her eyes traveling from one to another, in a maze.

"Why, I thought—" she began: her honest simplicity was always letting out secrets; Faith made haste to lay her hand over her mouth, saying:

"Oh, hush, Puss! Go on, Theodora; it shocks me to hear you, but go on."

"Well then, supposing anything so unheard of, *should* happen, as that any near and dear friend of mine should think of making me some trifling present."

"Trifling! Does she mean a reflection on her last year's presents?" muttered Faith.

"Didn't I work night and day to finish that lace set for her?" Miriam put in.

"Didn't I deny myself paper collars and pantaloon-straps, to buy her—what was it?" exclaimed Donald.

Theodora spread out her hands, deprecatingly. "Brethren and sistren! You have overwhelmed me with favors in the past; but it is war-time; I beg you won't impoverish yourselves on my account; only if you should be so injudicious as to get anything for me, I was just going to remark, if I might be so bold, that nothing would surprise and delight me so much—"

"Out with it!"

"As a United States flag."

"Hurrah!

"'Long may it wave
O'er the fair and the brave!'"

shouted Donald, flourishing the daily newspaper over his head. "Would you like it six feet by four?"

Miriam and Faith exchanged glances, a little disconcerted, for, as Jessie knew, they had just been laying other plans for birth-day presents.

"You see," said Theodora, "Mrs. Torrington has the red, white, and red draped over the piano in the drawing-room, where I have to sit under its shadow for hours every day. It would be a relief to my feelings if I could have the red, white, and blue over the mantle in my own room."

"Would they like it?" asked her mother.

"I don't suppose they would like it much; but they would not interfere with it. My room is my castle."

"You are right, Theodora," said her father. "If you can't be allowed so much as your country's flag in your own room, you certainly don't want to stay there."

"Come here, Jessie, and let me try this on," said Miriam, as she fastened her thread. It was a last Summer's hat of her own, which she had been making over and trimming for the younger sister. "There, mother, girls, how will that do?" she asked, as she perched the jaunty little gypsy thing upon the mass of curls, tipped it down so as to shade the white forehead, and tied the blue strings under the softly-rounded chin.

The little girl looked inquiringly from one to another, and met pleased eyes on every side. She was pretty as a trailing arbutus—one of the pinkest, and downiest, and sweetest of its race, and the hat was really artistic in its effect; but nobody said anything of the kind.

"That will do nicely, unless it is a little too dressy," was Mrs. Cameron's comment. "Isn't that ribbon rather too long?"

"Oh, I think not; it was just such a piece, and I hated to cut it."

Ah, Miriam! you know well enough you have use your contrivance to get those long, blue ends to float the sunny curls.

"It looks as if it grew on purpose for her," Theodora, picking out the bows, and giving the rosy c a fond pat.

"You mustn't be vain, my dear, or we shall ha give it to Ebenezer," said her father, with a good-na smile. "Ebenezer" had been the family scarecrow since Miriam was a baby, being held up as residuar atee of everything that the children quarelled over or proud of. Then he was a small child in a poor fa close by—now he was a large, awkward lout, with a l shock of yellow hair. So Jessie laughed at the pict her dainty little hat perched on his frowsy head went to the glass to see for herself, and her violet brightened with pleasure. Theodora could not but how soon her sweetness would be eaten up with va she were in the hands of such a mother as Mrs. Walton, who would have discussed every article c dress as if it were a matter of life and death, and praised her beauty as freely as if she had been a picture.

"Here is something!" exclaimed Donald, wh glancing over the Vermont items of the *Journal.* pare yourself, Theodora! 'B. J. Walton, son of S. H. Walton, of Waltonville, accepts a commiss captain of Co. B, in the —th Regt. of Vt. Volunte

"There!' that's the regular way for disappointed to do," remarked Faith—"go off to the wars and l a heap of the slain, while gallantly leading a des charge. Think what remorse will prey upon you it comes to that."

"Disappointed lovers!" laughed Theodora. "Some other girl has cured his disappointment long ago, no doubt; that's the regular way!"

"Only think how proud you might have been of your Captain," said Miriam, picking the shreds off from her dress.

"Imagine him before the enemy!" exclaimed Theodora, drawing a pile of music towards her. "I think I hear him—'Had we better advance or retreat? I don't know but it would be as well to wait a while. It looks very disagreeable on the field. If you please, my men, perhaps you had better fall back a little, for the present.'"

They all laughed; but the father, who was apt to take up the cause of the attacked, remarked:

"You can't tell how such a responsibility may bring him out. I shouldn't be surprised if he should prove a good officer and brave soldier."

Theodora cocked her head on one side, and made an incredulous run on the piano; still she respected her old lover for being a soldier at all, and did not fail to trace the course of the '—th Reg. V. V.,' as well as the newspapers would enable her.

XIX.

OFF FOR THE WAR.

THE volunteers were to leave the village Monday morning. On Sunday the minister preached an inspiriting sermon, arming them with a fresh grasp on the principles for which they were to risk their lives.

Mr. Cameron was no politician, but he was in the habit of pleading for freedom and justice in public as well as in private affairs with an edifying indifference as to who should be hit by his arguments. If any one was standing on the track of the truth, so much the worse for him; the truth must have free course, and be glorified. He was under the impression that it belonged to his duty to warn and exhort his people in their relations as citizens no less than as neighbors. Men were offended sometimes; they had been known to protest by "getting up and going out of meeting." Still there was a sincerity and candor about the man which held their confidence after all.

Many a young soldier's motives were ennobled, many a woman felt her sacrifice hallowed by that morning's service.

In the twilight, the Cameron family gathered, as they were used to do Sunday evenings, for "a sing."

There is seldom a sunset glory on the upper valley of the Connecticut. The western hills are too near and too high; but there are far-reaching shadows that creep slowly across the broad meadows and up the slopes of the eastern mountains, rising as the tide rises, till the top-

most summits are submerged. They sat gazing at this, and watching for the stars as they came out, one after one, in the deepening sky, while they sang once more together the dear old tunes, the well-remembered hymns. Faces grew dim in the gathering shade, but voices and hearts blended only more tenderly.

Then they began to repeat in turn verses from the Bible—strong words of courage, sweet words of promise. They all were dreading the morrow; but each was soothed and fortified as the best beloved voices came through the starry darkness, bringing such messages of heavenly cheer.

"Donald, won't you pray with us once more before you go?" the father asked, just before they knelt.

"Oh, why did he ask him!" thought Theodora, with a shock of alarm. The children had been used to praying aloud at Sunday evening worship, even when they were little, and the brothers had often done so as they grew older; but it was more than a year now since she had heard Donald's voice in prayer. She knew more than any one else of the doubts he had been wading through. She thought he would refuse, and she dreaded a discord in the sad sweetness of this last evening.

But he hesitated only one moment; then, humbly and simply as a little child—a little child that had lost its way—he begged the heavenly Father's care for them all.

"It was good to hear you pray once more," Theodora said to him, as she bade him good-night at the door of his room.

"I've never given over that," he said. "Sometimes it has come almost to the old soldier's prayer, 'Oh, God, if there is a God, save my soul, if I have a soul;' but I have felt all along that I must keep open communication

between my spirit and the Father of Spirits, or it was all over with me."

"Don't you get into the light, yet?" the sister asked, twisting a loop of his dressing-gown around its button, and looking wistfully up into his face.

"Not as I want to. But, I tell you, Theodora, if Christianity isn't true, it ought to be; it fits so exactly into one's life and wants at such a time."

"What ought to be, is—in God's plans," she answered, with a bright smile, drawing down his face for a good-night kiss.

The mother said the hard good-bye, the next morning, in her own room; but the father and sisters went to the depôt—as half the villagers went—to see the soldiers off.

There was only a drum and a fife, and a hundred men, in their ordinary dress, packed into common railroad-cars. No eagle lighted on their banners. In fact, if there had been any eagle, there was not any banner. A tame crow, which belonged to Mr. Joyce, had the bad taste to put himself at the head of the column as they were marching to the station, and flutter obliquely along before them. They scared him away, but he would come back, and, after they were in the cars, ran along on the roof, croaking, after his master's sinister fashion. No music—no flags—no uniform—no glorious omen; but of brave hearts, tears, smiles, blessings, and hurrahs, no lack.

A dense crowd blackened the sand for rods around the little depôt. Most of the women, and not a few of the men, were weeping, as if they looked their last on their dear boys. The young volunteer went in and out among them, looking courageous, and saying often, "Don't, mother; don't cry."

Larabee's tall figure was the unconscious centre of

any eyes, as he stood with his youngest child in his rms, nestling her flaxen head against his brown beard; n older girl holding fast by his hand, while a boy, four ears old, kept an affectionate hold on one of his coat-ails. His wife stood close beside him, trying her best to e brave, but looking very pale, with dark circles around her eyes.

Jim Bangs, the Nevada adventurer, was pushing restlessly about among the crowd, with a joke for everybody, but continually coming back to an old lady who sat by a window in the station-house, sobbing quietly. Jones, the carpenter, well of his wound, was going back with the rest. He was a reässuring sight, as a man who had been, and come back alive. Wherever he moved, people gathered around him, asking questions. The modest little man looked impatiently up the railroad-track for the train to come and deliver him.

As Donald stood on the platform, turning tears into laughter for a group of friends around him, a little, pale-faced old woman, with a thin black shawl strained around her shoulders and lace mitts on her large-jointed hands, came working her way through the throng towards him. She had a large bundle, done up in newspaper, and tied with a selvidge string, which she put into his hands with a mysterious, triumphant air.

"Why, Mrs. Graves, what's this? Did you come down on purpose to see us off? I feel honored."

"There, Donal', you jes' take that," she said, administering a pat to the bundle, to make sure it did not escape him. "Mr. Graves, he wa'n't for lettin' on me bring it. 'He won't want to be bothered with none of your stuff,' says he; but I says to him, says I, 'You jist let me alone. I know what that boy likes, and he's agoin' to

have it, to start on.' Don't I remember when you was a little feller, knee-high to a toad, how you used to stand by and watch me fryin' nut-cakes, and say, 'There a'n't no nut-cakes like yourn, Miss Graves, from Dan to Baresheby'? Them's the very words you said, the Winter afore yer mar put ye into trousers. I says to Mr. Graves, says I, 'He's agoin' to hev some o' them very nut-cakes for luncheon, and I'll bet ye they'll taste jist as good to him as they ever did.' I got up real early, and fried 'em this mornin', so's to hev 'em fresh. The cheese is some from the Home farm. I calc'lated 't would kind o' please 'em to hev ye hev some o' that; they used to think such an awful sight on ye. I knew they couldn't be down this mornin', it's such a good hay day."

"Good on your head!" exclaimed the young soldier, shaking hands warmly, and holding the uncouth, somewhat greasy bundle, as if it was a treasure.

"Tell Mr. Graves I believe he's a regular copperhead, to be trying to keep back aid and comfort from the United States forces in that way. I promise you, I shall be thinking of you, and the good old times in your kitchen, while I feast on your rations."

As he finished, he was lifting his hat to two young ladies just driving up. He turned over the doughnut package to Jessie's care, and went to help them out of their carriage. There was something about Donald Cameron that made women, of all classes and conditions, his friends. He was handsome and graceful, to be sure; but, more than that, he had that confiding, easy, yet respectful manner toward them which a boy is apt to gain from the society of a mother and sisters whom he loves and admires. The two girls he was just handing out,

h playful gallantry, had been his friends from child-
d; but neither they nor anybody else could tell which
liked best of the two—tricksy, saucy, kittenish Mer-
Myers, or self-reliant, intellectual Alice Fenton. Per-
s he couldn't have told, himself. He teased and
yed with the one, and had right good talks with the
er, and thoroughly enjoyed them both.

'See," said Merlie, holding up one of those lightly-
sted rose-buds, full of carmine color, that grow in
-fashioned gardens, with a sprig of cedar for its back-
und. "You shall wear my favor off to the wars. It's
ky you started to-day," pinning it into his button-hole,
l tipping her head this way and that like a canary-bird;
is the 'Last Rose of Summer'—on that bush. Now,
nald, mind you send me a rebel relic from the first
tle you go into—will you? Promise, or I will take
s right off."

'I promise—I vow! I'll send you a cannon-ball at
st," he answered, laughing into the merry face looking
at him, with a shower of auburn curls falling back
m it.

'No, no; don't be hateful, now. You could send me
love-letters out of a dead rebel's pocket, you know,
some such thing."

'How should you like your love-letters sent to some
chievous, wicked little sprite down South?"

Merlie tossed her head, with a charming flush on her
ek, declaring she should keep on the safe side by never
iting any. Alice did not quite like the half-quizzical, half-
d smile on Donald's lips, as he watched her, and said
herself, she wished Merlie would not be quite so free;
r manner was as good as a challenge to him to send her
ove-letter; still she would have given anything to have

pinned on that rose-bud herself; but then, any little thing like that seemed to mean so much more when she did it. How could Merlie have the heart to joke. He might never come back again. She turned away, as if to watch for the train, but she did not look up, when, the next moment, Donald came to her side, for tears had filled her eyes.

"Don't finish the Wallenstein till I come back, will you? Will you wait for me, Alice?"

She nodded assent; she could not speak for thinking "What if—"

"I am glad you are going, Donald," she said, when she was quite sure of herself. "I would go in a moment, if I was a man."

"I thought you would bid me God-speed," he said, looking into her eyes, with a grateful smile.

"Dear me! Nobody cares what I think, more than if I was a squirrel," said Merlie, to herself. "I wish there was something to me, like Alice."

But now the whistle was heard; the locomotive, with its train, came sweeping around the curve between the hills, growing larger to the eye with wonderful speed.

Then there were hurried last words and outbursts of tears, kisses, and forced jokes, and the hundred men hurried into the cars. Under the window where Donald found a seat, stood his father and sisters and special friends. We all know those precious, distressing last minutes before the train starts, when we feel as if it were the only chance to say a hundred things, and therefore cannot think of one thing to say.

But now comes the "All aboard!"—the ringing, the shriek and puff of the engine, the jerks of the coupling, the last hand-grasp and look of love, the three tin

three rousing cheers, waving hats and handkerchiefs, and the train speeds away across the green meadows, carrying its young heroes, God only knows whither!

"Letters from the boys" were now the great interest at the Rockbridge parsonage. Those from the captain in the Western Army, were short, but pithy, affectionate, and hopeful. Donald's were much longer, often rich in humorous stories and graphic descriptions of camp-life, always overflowing with love for the home friends.

Meanwhile, the newspapers showed that the fresh campaign, under the new General whose headquarters were declared to be in the saddle and subsistence on the enemy's country was fairly, hotly opened. The gathering wave broke on the slopes of Cedar Mountain, one Saturday afternoon, early in August. By Monday, the piazza of the Rockbridge post-office was white with newspapers as men's eyes darted down the columns to see whether the new recruits were in the action. One after another satisfied himself—"No Vermont troops there"—and went back to read the general news.

The same experience was repeated through all the August battles.

"Our Brigade gets no chance to strike a blow yet," wrote Donald, the first of September. "The boys are all chafing under it. We can't see any reason we shouldn't fight, nor why our Division might not have saved the day if we had been allowed to. We hear rumors of jealousies among generals preventing it, but we don't know. It is an odd experience for Yankees to be handled in this blind way, that soldiers must be. If there is anything the spread eagle holds to, it is—'I'm as good as anybody;' and it is anything but American to obey orders

without any notion of the wherefore. I fancy it v
worth something to this generation to get the i
obedience and discipline into their heads. Obedie
likely to be either a grand virtue or a craven vice.
republic there is little to compel it, and few men
to it as a voluntary self-subjection. So, I think i
be one of the sweet uses of this adversity to tea
citizens to obey. It does me good to see these
Yankees, who never minded their mothers, an
prided themselves on turning out the schoolmaster
they were boys, and have swaggered along with a
independence ever since, bow their necks to milita
cipline as patiently as they do."

XX.

THE FLAG-RAISING.

EARLY in the Autumn, Theodora went back to West Virginia. Safety required her to take an upper route. Harper's Ferry, which had charmed her with its grand and peaceful beauty, when she saw it through wreaths of morning mist, the first time she was on her way to Wheeling, was now invested by a large Federal force, and liable any day to become a battle-ground.

Lee had crossed the Potomac, and was summoning Maryland to his standard. Full of patriotic zeal as the North had been, it was not till now that it felt just that resistant wrath which must have nerved the South from the first moment Government troops were on Southern soil. Let a man break his compacts with you, seize on your property, undermine your standing,—you do not take him by the throat till you catch him breaking into your house. To be sure, Maryland was no more an integral part of the Union than Georgia, but the majority of her people were true to it; her soil was the great highway between the Northern States and the Capital; and the rebels intensified the devotion of every loyal heart by crossing her borders.

The Torringtons gave Theodora a cordial welcome; the children were uproariously glad. The tea-table was waiting for her, but before the meal was through she felt that

the Summer had ripened in them a hatred of the Government, and a fierce enthusiasm for the Confederacy, which they no longer tried in the least to disguise.

"How did you leave them all at home?" asked Mrs. Torrington, as she turned the tea.

"Very well. My father and mother sent their love to you, and told me to thank you for being so good to this child of theirs."

The lady's large black eyes melted into a smile as easily as they flashed anger, and she threw Theodora one of her sweetest glances, as she answered:

"I don't know who could help being good to her. They needn't to thank me. Cæsar, pass the honey to Miss Dora. That pet brother of yours is through college, I suppose. Did you have him at home with you?"

"He is in the army, Mrs. Torrington. Both my brothers are in the army."

In an instant, it was as if a thick cloud had gone over the sun.

"I fancied your brothers were too honorable to belong to that rabble."

Theodora's heart stood still for a moment, struck dumb with indignation; then it bounded on hot and fast.

"They are too honorable not to defend their country," she answered, "and they are proud of the army they belong to."

Mrs. Torrington gave a short, scornful laugh.

"At first there did seem to be a little sense of decency in it, and some gentlemen among the generals, but they are getting that outrageous human nature cannot stand it. They are just ravaging Old Virginia, turning peaceable people out of their homes, and stealing their property. I should rather a brother of mine would belong to a band

of robbers. There is honor among thieves and there's none in that army."

Theodora dared not speak lest she should say something she should be sorry for. Her cheeks burned, but her hand was so cold and trembling, she could hardly raise her glass steadily to her lips.

Mr. Torrington tried to pour oil on the waters, by remarking there were excesses in every army; but the oil seemed to fall on fire instead, and his wife replied, her eyes flashing at him:

"Yes; but what is excess in other armies is the order of the day with this horde of ruffians."

"Indeed, Mrs. Torrington, I think you are greatly mistaken," said Theodora. "I have heard our soldiers tell of guarding the homes of Confederate families on their very camp-ground."

"It may have been so at first, but not now."

"I hardly know why those who refuse to be called citizens of the United States should expect to enjoy all the rights of citizens," said Theodora, in as calm a tone as she could command.

"Cæsar, if we need anything more, I will ring," said Mrs. Torrington. As soon as he had left the room, his mistress went on: "That letter, Walter, was from cousin Hugh. He writes they have stolen twenty of his negroes."

"Quite in character!"

"How did they get hold of them?"

"He let them out to work on the fortifications near the outposts, and I suppose they wheedled them away. All right, I presume, Miss Cameron thinks."

She never said "Miss Cameron," unless she was angry, and she shot with it a very severe glance at Theodora, who replied, as they rose from the table:

"I think if they were men, they had a right to choose the government they wished to live under. If they were things, that the Union army had just as good a right to capture them as so many wheel-barrows."

She went up to her room trembling as one's arm trembles from curbing a high-mettled horse. She had held her temper well in hand. She had said nothing unjust or unkind, but her face was glowing, and her eyes were dark with anger as she locked herself into her room. She would have the storm out there, where it could do no mischef. How could she endure scenes like this every day!

Pattering steps and merry little voices came up the stairs, and dimpled knuckles knocked at the door.

"May we come in 'n see you unwhack your twunk, Miss Dowa?" asked the twins.

"By and by, kittens, I am not going to begin just yet; I'll blow the old whistle when I am ready." She kissed their round little faces, and shut the door on their bright, waiting eyes.

"I must get through it for their sake," she said to herself.

She went to the window, threw open the smoky blinds, and sat gazing down into the turbid river.

There is a certain luxury in strong passion of any kind, and many people nurse their wrath just for the pleasure of feeling its warmth. This girl had the temperament which rejoices in feeling the whole soul stirred; but the New Testament had been too thoroughly wrought into her conscience to let her enjoy a fit of fury. To be incapable of anger cannot be Godlike, but the emotion can never hold revel in a soul where it is compelled to listen to the voice, "Be just! thus far and no farther."

As she turned her head, she noticed, in a dainty vase on the toilet-table, one red-hearted, half-open moss-rose. It gave her a quick pang of generous remorse. It told of a loving thought of her before she came. It was just like the delicate kindnesses Mrs. Torrington was always doing. It brought back a hundred generous deeds and lovely looks. She seemed to feel again the soft, cool hand that soothed her so often in an acclimating illness she had the first Spring she was there. The sweetness of the flower pleaded for its giver.

"Oh, but it was so unfair, so cruel, so rude!" she said to herself, with knit brows; "but then, she is so warm-hearted! What if she is? She has so right to say such hateful things. But then, she never was taught to control herself. What of that? Let her teach herself. Of course she knows better—she loves her South so, it makes her unjust. So do I love the North, but I don't hold myself free to insult her about it. But you have been trained to govern your tongue ever since you could speak. I don't care, it was *wrong*. Well, what then? Let God take care of that. Do you look out for yourself, Theodora Cameron! Are you always fair? Do you always give full credit to the other side? Keep yourself just, and kind, and forbearing; that's your look-out. Love her for what is lovely; and be patient with what isn't."

When her thoughts had reached this point, she bent down to the rose to drink in its fragrance, and the rose looked up into a face sweeter than its own.

Again came the gleeful chatter of the twins up the stairway, and the soft pounding of their little fists on the door.

"Here 's a yetter for you!" cried Pinky.

"Pos'man bwinged it," added Winky.

"Oh, thank you, dearies!" She seized it eagerly; it was Donald's hand.

"Mamma said you didn't want us when you yead yetter," said Pinky, looking up, with her thumb in mouth, as if she hoped to hear that view disputed.

"Will Pinky-Winky run downstairs and tell ma that Miss Dora thanks her for the pretty rose? ' when you hear the whistle, you shall come up again I have something in my trunk that will make your shine. Now run, like good kittens."

She could kiss them now without any discord bet face and heart.

The moment they had fluttered out, she locke door and sat down to feast on her letter. It was a pled sheet written in pencil:

"NEAR CRAMPTON GAP, M
"*Sept.* 15, 186

"Hip! Hip! Hurrah! My first battle is a vic The enemy had a grand position on the top and slo South Mountain, but we had the pleasure of pu them back and back until they broke and ran dow other side, while we held the summit.

"I promised to tell you, my dear, how the first felt. So I shall have to confess that when the shell flew over our heads with their fiendish shriek an cannon balls came ploughing through our ranks, I have taken to my heels with great pleasure—I had sympathy with the Bull Run renegades than any had in the time of it. However, when we were well into the fight, I thought of nothing but pushir enemy. I never knew what excitement meant b When we had fought our way to the crest of the

tain, they made a resolute stand and we battled it there —half an hour, they say—I had no idea of time—and then they had to give way, and we forced them down the hill. I tell you, Theodora, that was grand!

"I had no idea there was so much tiger blood in me. I suppose ages of peaceful civilization wouldn't quench the original savage so that he couldn't be roused at sight of blood. I am glad to have done my duty—glad to have felt for once the heroic rage of battle; but it is barbarous business and I hate it. The men are in high spirits, and believe this is the turn of the tide.

"We push on immediately to the relief of Harper's Ferry. I am munching hard-tack as I write, and have a stump for my desk. Our chaplain, who is going back with some of the wounded, will mail this for me.

"Yours forever, DONALD."

The sister read this letter at lightning speed to see that all was well; then she went over it slowly, drinking it all in and thinking it all over. Then she put it in her pocket, and went to unpacking with a song and a prayer in her heart. She wanted to be alone, but she never broke a promise to the children. So she took down a wooden whistle that hung by a pink ribbon to her mirror. It was one that Pelham Bell had made for her, in a frolic, to prove he could whistle as well as a Yankee. She went to the door and blew the signal which Pinky-Winky delighted to hear. An outburst from the nursery and they came clambering up the stairs; Winky grasping the balusters with her fat little hand, and putting the same foot forward every time, while the bolder Pinky proudly climbed in the middle of the stair with one foot, then the other, like grown people.

Theodora stood at the top, laughing, and holding out her hands to them.

"Would you mind if I came too, Miss Dora?" asked Caro.

She stood at the foot of the stairs tying on her hair-ribbon, and looking up coaxingly. Caro's hair-ribbon was always coming off. The little scarlet circlet with a bow on one side, just as it slipped off from the end of the heavy black braid which hung down her back, was a familiar object on the floor behind the piano-stool, in a chair in the dining-room, on the front doorsteps. Aleck used to declare it was a comfort to know if Caro ever was lost they could track her by her hair-ribbons.

"It 's too good to be true—you are really back again,' she said, as she came up and threw her arms around "Miss Dora," gazing up into her face with her ardent black eyes. Theodora patted her brown cheek fondly. The friend was not changed at any rate. Her passionate devotion had been almost burdensome, sometimes, but now it was grateful, and she returned her embraces with a warmth that made the little brunette supremely happy. The twins thought these endearments quite superfluous and clamored to see what was in "the twunk."

So Caro threw herself down on the floor at the end of it, while Theodora seated herself in front, on an ottoman which she had made by covering a box with a piece of gay patch.

Pinky-Winky grasped the edge of the trunk at the other end, dancing up and down, asking questions and raising a panic every few minutes by leaning on the strap, at the risk of pulling down the cover and decapitating themselves.

"See what my sister Jessie sent you, kittens," e

claimed Theodora, taking out a large, thin box. She slowly and mysteriously lifted the cover, while the twins bent forward, eyes wide open and lips parted, to catch the first glimpse. Two paper dolls with very auburn hair, and very blue eyes, and very red cheeks, and a gorgeous wardrobe! Squeals of delight burst from the little women. They leaned forward, each eager to get hold first.

"Pinky-Winky, you must not do that!" cried Theodora, in terror for their lives. "You will pull that heavy cover down, and smash your poor little heads flat!"

Winky started back with an awe-struck expression, and put her two mischievous hands in each other's care behind her back. Pinky put one arm around Miss Dora's neck, and leaning forward till her eyes were within three inches of hers, asked, her airy curls quivering with curiosity:

"Would I be a paper doll, then?"

"You would be almost as thin," she answered, laughing, and trying to look very solemn. "See, you shall have the paper dollies and their clothes spread out on this chair, the other side of the room; then you can have a good time, and be all safe. Jessie painted their faces for you, herself."

"Now we shall have some peace," said Caro, as she came back.

As often happens, the sister of fourteen felt how very childish the children were—more than their mother did, or the young lady friend.

She was full of questions about the vacation. She never tired of hearing about Miss Dora's home. It seemed like another world to her. She took out of the trunk a photograph-album she had often pored over by the hour, and inquired about each member of the family, as she

lingered over their likenesses. Donald's picture al had a fascination for her, and here was a new one, home from Woodstock.

"Oh, isn't he too elegant for anything in his uni —and with side-whiskers! I'm glad he doesn't w moustache, his mouth is so beautiful. I'll tell you this looks like, Miss Dora! You know mamma's er ing of Byron?"

"Count D'Orsay's profile likeness of him? taking the album from her hand, and looking critic the photograph. "It really is like it, isn't it? Only ald's lips and chin are less full, and more firm. Th pression of the lower part of the face is altogethe ferent—but the forehead, and the nose, and the cu that short upper lip, and the shape of the head—ye are very like."

"Is he like Lord Byron, do you think?" asked whose romantic imagination had just been drinking drunk from Lara and the Corsair,

"Not in the least," laughed Theodora. "I nev a sneer on his face in my life. Donald isn't a either, my dear. He's just a dear, noble old boy- him!"

She looked lovingly at the picture a moment, shut the book, and handed it back, going on wit work of sorting out the contents of the trunk in p the carpet. By this time the terrible infants had de their paper images, and come in quest of new wonc

"Oh, pwetty! pwetty!" cried Pinky.

"Me see!" begged Winky, grabbing Miss Dora's chokingly by the back of the neck to lift herself u look over her shoulder.

It was a glimpse of the red, white, and blue of t

tional flag that was exciting the admiration of these young secessionists.

Theodora shook out its silken folds.

"That was my birth-day present from my brothers and sisters," she said.

As soon as the small secessionists saw what it was, they made up a face at it. They were dramatic little creatures. Nothing pleased them better than to make a show of love or hate, and their mother had taught them to make grimaces at that flag just as children learn to glower at a picture of Herod or Bluebeard.

"No, no, Pinky-Winky; not at this. Miss Dora loves it." She kissed it reverently. "I can't let Pinky-Winky come up here if they make up faces at this."

The twins shrank back, abashed. They were used to being laughed at and applauded when they did it.

Caro said nothing, but looked greatly interested. She was getting into the revolutionary age when the mind most naturally takes an attitude of resistance. The fact that her parents and most of the visitors who came to the house were secessionists made her a Unionist. Theodora's influence over her was boundless, and the very fact that she shunned using it, in this respect, like an act of treachery, made it all the more powerful.

The three followed every motion with their eyes, while "Miss Dora" took from the bottom of her trunk a framed engraving of that homely face which true hearts all over the North were learning to love—hung it on the wall opposite the door—then draped the beautiful banner above it.

She was adroit in all manner of handiwork, and her room had a character of its own in many pretty little ornaments and conveniences of her contrivance. Under

the picture she put a bracket Robert carved for her the last time he was at home; then she took Donald's photograph out of the album, placed it on a small easel made of dainty fretwork, formed of sections of butternut shells which grew on the home place.

"It looks like a little shrine!" exclaimed Caro, when this stood on the bracket. "Why don't you put this rose-bud there too?"

"Did you bring it here, or your mother?"

"Mamma."

"I think we will let it stand where it is; it looks beautifully on the white toilet-table."

"Oh, Miss Dora, I understand!" said the young girl with kindling eyes. "You'll not have a rebel rose under that flag!"

"No, Caro, not that," she answered; "but it wouldn't be quite pleasant to your mamma to have it there."

The large black eyes softened. The delicate respect for the rights and feelings of other people which marked Theodora's daily life, had a refining, chastening effect upon her young admirer, which she hardly dreamed of. The child felt her persuasions in their long talks; but they were as nothing beside that mighty, subtile influence which flowed in upon her constantly from a self-control, fidelity, and sweetness which were no more meant for her than the violets in the woods grow for the hand which finds them out.

At last, everything was in its place. The room seemed to forget that its mistress had been away. Aunt Phillis came for Pinky-Winky, and went through the whole siege of overtures, parallel approaches, stratagems, and surprises which were required, every night, to induce their ladyships to surrender their pursuit of happiness,

and go to bed. Then Theodora went down with Caro, to sit a little while in the parlor, between daylight and dark.

Mrs. Torrington sat by the window, and asked, as they came in, "Are you too tired to give me one song, Miss Dora? You don't know how I have missed your music."

She was glad to sing rather than talk, and sat down to the piano at once. She was a lovely twilight singer; there was a mystery of tender depth in her voice, that blended with the mellow glooms of sunset. As she sang, one after another, the ballads Mrs. Torrington loved best, she knew, by the gentle words dropped between, that she was singing their spirits into harmony again. It seemed genial and home-like once more.

XXI.

NEWS FROM THE FRONT.

THEY all met at the breakfast-table with the old friendliness, and everything went smoothly till Theodora happened to ask, in the midst of the pleasant chat, "How are the Barclays?"

"I've not seen the Barclays for two months past," answered Mrs. Torrington, with a warning chill in her voice.

So, they had come out as Unionists, no doubt. She inwardly blessed Pinky-Winky for raising an outcry for more syrup on their buckwheat-cakes. What topic was it safe to venture!

Table-talk is not exhilarating when you have to look every remark over, before you utter it, to see if there is a cutting edge anywhere about it.

"What route did you come, Miss Dora?" asked Mr. Torrington.

"By Cleveland. My father thought the lower routes not safe."

"I should think not! Have you seen the particulars of the good news from Harper's Ferry, in this morning's paper, my dear?" he asked, looking across at his wife. "The Yankees have surrendered eleven thousand infantry, fifty cannon, and immense stores."

"Their cowardice is worthy of their cause," observed Mrs. Torrington.

"What if eleven thousand brave men have been be-

trayed by one traitor?" said Theodora, who had looked into the newspaper for herself. "I am sure Stonewall Jackson is too high-minded a man to take much pride in such a victory."

This news gave her a new source of anxiety. Donald had written, Sunday night, that they were to move on immediately to Harper's Ferry. Had they reached there in season to be surrendered, with the rest, as prisoners of war? She studied the newspaper accounts, but got no certainty.

Wednesday, there were rumors of a great battle—Thursday, they were confirmed. Papers, on each side, claimed the victory. All agreed that the slaughter was fearful—the struggle one of the most stubborn and terrific yet known—the line of battle four miles long—the greatest generals on both sides engaged.

Theodora commenced giving her music-lessons that day; but, as she mechanically counted "One—two—three—four," she heard the booming of cannon five hundred miles away, more plainly than the piano exercises, and saw her brother, wrapt in an atmosphere of fire and smoke, more clearly than the young girl at her side.

It was well for her that her nature was resolutely hopeful. Though her heart quailed now and then under the awful possibility, she yet expected, somehow, to hear that he was safe. It pained her to think what distress her mother was suffering. For her, Donald must die a hundred deaths. Ah! the mothers went through more than the soldiers did, in that terrible time!

All the newspapers which came to the house gave the Confederate version. Theodora glanced them over—saw with what miracles of bravery the Confederate troops repulsed greatly outnumbering Northern forces; then she

hurried off to the city reading-room, to get hold of some loyal paper. Then she read with what desperate daring the Union soldiers attacked and worsted the rebels in vastly superior numbers. That singular fact she always noticed, as she read the report of the same battle from the two sides. Whatever was done by either party was achieved against overwhelming odds.

A stranger, who sat impatiently waiting to take the newspaper as soon as she was done with it, took pains to notice what it was, at the foot of the second column, that could have made her cheek flush and her eyes brighten so. He did not understand it much better when he read: "At this crisis, when the key to the position had been four times won and lost, Franklin came up with fresh troops, and formed grandly on the left. General Smith, with his Maine and Vermont regiments, was ordered to re-take the corn-field. Magnificently they did it. They swept the field like a cloud shadow, fell upon the woods, cleared them in ten minutes, and held them."

He looked up at the young lady, who stood buttoning her glove, with a proud smile still lingering on her face, and wondered what there was in that to please her so much,—gave up the puzzle, and went on with his reading. He did not know that she was a Vermonter; that she had a dear hero in that division, and whatever gallant deed they did, she felt a right to glory in.

She walked along the dingy street like a queen; her brother's division had carried themselves splendidly. Then she laughed at herself—"How absurd!" Still it was not so very foolish, after all; the pride we feel in our country, our State, our soldiers, is surely a more generous thing than any pride we take in our very selves.

As she came up to the post-office, she saw Moll Pitcher

standing before the door. The barrel-shaped, tawny old creature was welcome as a phantom of delight. She stopped to pat her neck and stroke down her face, and then she caught sight of her uncle standing alone in the office, looking over his New York *Journal*. She went quietly up behind him, and put her hands around his arm. He looked down, as if shocked at the liberty some one was taking, saw who it was, and threw his two arms, *Journal* and all, around her; kissed her on each cheek, hugging her hard, patting her shoulders, and saying:

"Well, well, well; you sly Puss, where did you come from? Well, well, well. I am glad to see you—very glad to see you."

"I was getting quite home-sick for you, uncle."

"Jump right into the buggy; I have only to go around to the bank, and then I will carry you right out home. See what a glorious battle we have fought! If those rascally rebels hadn't thought discretion the better part of valor, and decamped by night, we should have made a final end of them."

She found it hard to persuade her uncle that she must attend to her pupils, and could not go out to Esmadura till Saturday afternoon. Then she went on her way, cheered by sunning herself in the warmth of his great heart.

She thought she had nothing but hope for Donald; but when all the mails for Friday and Saturday came in without a word to say he was still alive, there began a trembling away in some unacknowledged corner of her heart. The very kindness of the family, as they saw how she watched for the postman, made her anxious.

The change of going up to Esmadura for Sunday was a relief.

As her horse's feet clattered up to the door, Monday morning, she spied two little heads at the window, watching for her; the moment they saw her, they held up a letter against the pane. She caught her breath in hope and fear, sprang from her horse, and ran up the steps.

Mrs. Torrington threw the door open for her, and gave her the letter, looking very happy, saying:

"I hope we have good news for you. Caro says it is your brother's own hand."

"Oh, it is; bless you!" She looked as glad as if it was her own brother, and Theodora vowed within herself that she never would mind whatever provoking thing she might say.

It was a short letter, but a great relief.

"I am untouched. It is such a wilderness of death, we are too busy to write. I had to act in Jones' place as lieutenant. You will like to know that the men are urgent I should have the commission. More in a few days. Don't worry, darling. I am all right."

He had already been advanced through the grades of non-commissioned officers.

The country was all astir, pushing forward help for the thousands of sufferers strewn over the fields and through the woods along the Antietam. Never was an army so followed by the love and care of home; but beyond the utmost that care could and love would do, lay a savage waste of distress untouched. Brave young lives went out in solitary patience, under the lonely stars. Wounds which fond hands would gladly have tended, ached and bled, festered and blackened, before human help could reach them, over all those acres of broken bones and mutilated flesh. Surgeons, nurses, Sanitary and Christian

Commission delegates were hurried forward, and did all they could to meet the instant and appalling need.

The last of the week, a long letter from Donald, which had been received at home and already sent Miriam to read, was forwarded to Theodora. It was written on the twentieth, and gave his battle experiences, and then the more awful experience of helping to bury the dead and take care of the wounded:

"I was one of the men detailed for this ghastly work, and was at it all day yesterday and far into the night," he wrote. "God forbid you should ever dream of such horrid sights as I have seen. I would not describe them to you, if I could. You preached a peace-sermon, father, one fast-day, when I was a boy, which made a great impression on me; but that battle-field was such a peace-sermon as no man ever preached. This hideous tearing to pieces of healthy young bodies!—this driving of the souls of men to their awful account—what a shocking piece of business it is! And yet we think it was well done, and I did my share of it! Well, the life of the country is worth more than the lives of all these men, and they suffered willingly for her, poor fellows. I didn't mean to moralize, but a man can't see such sights without some thinking. Don't infer that I am not glad to be here. The war had to come, and since it had to, I would not lose my chance to do a patriot's duty.

"I must tell you about one little incident of yesterday. The sun was just going down, red and thirsty, when I came upon the corner of the open field, just on the edge of an oak grove where a whole windrow of our men had fallen, charging one of the enemy's batteries. Their colonel had fallen among them, and I made for him, as he

looked rather more alive than anybody else in the bloody *melée*. He was trying to stanch an ugly wound in his face—cheek torn open by a piece of shell. His horse lay beside him groaning in mortal pain, rubbing its head to and fro on the ground. I declare, I sometimes pity the horses more than the men. They haven't the satisfaction of knowing what they are dying for. The officer couldn't speak, but he looked at me beseechingly, pointed at the pistol in the holster of his saddle, and then at his horse. I understood that he wanted me to put the poor thing out of misery, and saw by his face I was right as I pointed the pistol at her head. He reached out his hand feebly and patted the creature's beautiful neck. She lay quiet under his touch. He turned away his eyes and I fired. She shivered and grew still; then I moved him so that he could rest against her body more comfortably, and tried to give him water from my canteen, this bleeding makes such a consuming thirst; but he couldn't manage it. He was growing faint, and I shouted to a surgeon who came just then within hail. 'Hold on a minute,' I said to my man, 'and we'll have you taken care of.' He looked over to a rebel who lay near us, breathing horribly with a bullet in his breast, and motioned—'Him first.' There's a Sidney for you, girls. Just as much knighthood now as there was in the days of chain-mail. The surgeon, with a little kind-hearted grumbling, did as he was desired, and while he was attending to the Johnny, I thought I would try what I could do for the colonel myself. I remembered how you patched together that foot of mine, mother, when I was a youngster; so I got out Theodora's roll of surgical appliances, brought the gap together as well as I could with the sticking-plaster, piled on the lint, and tied up the face

h the bandage. Perhaps it was not a first-class opera-
n, but the doctor said it saved him a deal of blood
ich he couldn't afford to lose. A squad of San. Com.
n came along by this time with an ambulance, but
re were so many worse wounded men for them to see
I thought I had better engineer him over to the hos-
al myself, if I could. As he couldn't take the con-
ts of my canteen, inside, I gave him some externally,
hing his head and washing the blood off his face where
ould get at it. That revived him so much that he got
o his feet, with my help, and by resting his arm on
shoulders, managed to walk, stopping often to rest,
r to a barn, which made part of an extempore hospi-
. It was pretty dark by the time we got there, and
re was a light at the farther end of the barn where they
re taking off some poor wretch's leg. Rows of wounded
n lay all along the floor, but I found a horse's stall
occupied; with plenty of hay in the manger. With
it, I made a first-rate bed in two minutes, and it did
y heart good to hear the comfortable sigh my colonel
ve as he lay down on it.

"It was a dismal place enough to be sure, full of groans,
t it was better than the hard ground where he had been
ing for two days, alone.

"Just as I was wishing I could give him some nourish-
ent before I left him, I heard a woman's voice saying,
Here's some beef tea for you, my friend.' If an angel
d appeared to us, we couldn't have been more sur-
rised nor so well pleased, for I never heard of angels
rrying around beef tea. There stood a pale, fragile-
oking lady, with a lantern in one hand and a quart bowl
the other. I told her I was afraid he couldn't drink
r his wound, but she said in a sweet, cheery voice, she
as sure we could manage it some way. So down she

went on her knees beside him, and while I held the
tern, she put the spoon between his lips and he slo
sipped and swallowed three or four spoonfuls, wh
brightened him up wonderfully. It was 'a sight for
een,' to see with what thankful looks he followed her
she went out of that stall to comfort the next man.
concluded by this time, that it wouldn't do to h
around one sufferer much longer, since there were
thousand to be cared for; so I went back to the fi
But I should really like to know who that man w
Pain is a selfish thing, and the man who looks out for
horse and his enemy when he is in misery himself,
made of good stuff.

"As I came out of the barn, an ambulance was sta
ing at the door, and the driver asked me to tell M
Harris he was ready to take her over to the big hospi
I found her down on the barn floor with a dying bo
head in her lap, and his eyes fixed on her face, while
soothed him in motherly tones—I caught the wo
'Though I walk through the valley—' I felt honored
help her into the ambulance, and send a soldier's bless
after her. You have no idea what reverence our n
feel for such a woman, who braves all these revolt
sights and endures such hardship for their sake. Th
poor fellows followed her with wistful eyes as she w
away, and some of them said, 'Do come back ag
mother.' She told them she was going to be ready
them at the larger hospital.

"Send this to the girls, please, as I may not hav
chance to write them for a few days. No knowing l
soon we shall follow the friends who left us so unc
moniously Thursday night.

"God be wi' ye all, my best and dearest!

"DONALD.

A few days later came a short missive, written to riam, and sent to the other absent sister by the way of ne:

'You, my beloved eldest sister, shall have the honor of ring first the announcement that your brother Don ls a commission as First Lieutenant of Co. —, —th Reg. Vols. Pass along the interesting information to the . Charge them not to run wild with vain-glory. I ember when we read 'Guy Mannering' how amused were, where Dominie Sampson reads the Laird his mission as justice of the peace—'The king has been sed to appoint'—and Ellengowan bursts out, eased! Honest gentleman! I'm sure he can't be er pleased than I am.' I appreciate his feelings. lly, though, what does gratify me very much is, that boys of the company seem so heartily glad of it. e cheers they gave when I appeared in my shoulder-ps for the first time, made the whole camp ring.

By the way, I had to go over to the hospital this rning, and whom should I see there but my Antietam nel. I shouldn't have recognized him: but he knew , and called to me. He is getting on famously, and med quite unnecessarily grateful for my care that ht. His name is Rolf—from Chicago. Some one of l girls asked if he was 'nice looking.' I might have wn you wouldn't feel any interest in him if he was . When a man's face is cut open to the cheek bone ot the most favorable occasion that could be desired pronouncing on his beauty. However, I took an ob-vation for your benefit this morning—so far as the ldages would allow, and from the north-west corner of forehead, one grey eye, the side of his nose that is

least swollen, one end of his mouth, and his figure couchant under a blanket, I should infer that he was a well-made man."

With this was enclosed a short note from the mother, in which she said:

"Mr. Larabee writes his wife that they are all delighted with Donald's appointment; that the men will do anything for him."

One letter from her brother, which Theodora received about that time, she did not send home, but kept, to read over and over again:

"My Darling Sister:—

"Your letters are like cold water to the thirstiest kind of a soul. Do send them thicker and faster and more o them. I believe I would give my new commission for talk with you to-day. If you could only sit down on thi log beside me, this bright Sunday morning, wouldn there be a few things to say! I don't know as yo would listen to me, at first, for looking about you at th scene that would be so novel to you, though now so com monplace to me. A thing's commonness does not spo it, though, and I only wish I could show my enthusiast beauty-lover this picturesque camp by the river side. can see just the dear old smile of delight that would ste over your face. So your friends are not much pleas with the threatened Emancipation Proclamation. W soldiers must beg leave to differ from them. It crippl the enemy in the right arm, and, besides, most of us fe as if the war was to be on the right basis at last, and h manity was sure to gain all its costs. We have the chan

to save the life of our country, and at the same time clear her of a dark stain.

"I must tell you, Theodora, one incident of that Antietam battle-field which I have never spoken of to any one. It was late, and the clouds were hurrying across the sky, squads of soldiers, Sanitary and Christian Commission men were going over the field with lanterns, trying to pick out the living from the dead, and ambulances were moving in and out among the piles of mangled men. I heard a moaning from the oak grove near us, and left my party to find the sufferer. He lay staring up into the sky through an opening in the branches. As I bent over him, he said, 'No chance for me; I b'lieve my back is broke.' I raised his head on a knapsack, gave him some drink, and asked what I could do for him. He asked me to take a little money out of his pocket and send it to his wife. 'There's a tintype o' her in the wallet there, too; you may as well send that back; I don't 'zactly like to have it pitched into the dead hole 'long with me, when the breath's out of me.'

"I laid the money and the picture carefully in my diary, and wrote the address as well as I could in the dark. One star was looking down at the man through that break in the tree-tops. 'Poor girl! she'll have a hard row to hoe,' he said, with a sigh, as I finished writing. 'If you don't mind the trouble, I wish you'd jest say to her that I wish I'd done better by her. Tell her I always thought the world and all of her, if I *was* a leetle ha'sh sometimes. Tell her I fought hard all day, and died like a man, will ye? And I ain't sorry I came. The country's worth dyin' for, ain't she, sir?'

"'Indeed she is, and she won't forget the brave fellows that have fallen for her on this field,' I answered. 'Be

you one of them prayin' chaps?' he asked. I suppose he meant one of the Christian Commission men. I told him I was a soldier, but I would pray for him if he wanted me to.

"'I wouldn't mind dyin',' said the poor fellow, 'if I knew I'd go to the good place. I hain't lived as I'd ought t'; always meant to turn over a new leaf, and now my chance is up;' and he heaved a great sigh, and rolled his head hopelessly on one side.

"What could I tell him, Theodora, but the self-same gospel my father taught me when I was a little child- 'He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.' The Bible way of saving men never seemed me so simple or so sure as it did with the hungry eyes that dying man fastened on my face, while I tried to tell it, kneeling beside him, and then begged the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit.

"Many things are growing clearer to me. 'In the still air of delightful studies' one may meditate forever without coming to a positive belief; but here, one is practically forced to a decision in religious matters. Men are challenged to declare themselves. Good and evil are sharply defined. I should wrong all I hold sacred, if I should keep myself aloof from the Christian men in the brigade who are working nobly to win their comrades to God.

"You don't know what solace and strength your sympathy has been to me all along, you precious girl! God bless you! I am more at peace, here in the midst of war, than I have been for a year and a half. I feel the rock under my feet again. Life stretches before me more awful, but more glorious than ever before. Without the key Christianity gives it, it is a

"'tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying—nothing.'

"I am not back just where I was at first. I have a much broader idea of the 'diversities of operations' which the 'same spirit' is carrying on, the world around. I am not confident that I yet have the truth on some points of doctrine I was once ready to demonstrate, but I believe my life is hid with Christ in God, and in that sacred hiding, all that I need to know will be revealed to me.

"What a long letter I have written! You must keep it to read by installments when I can't get a chance to write.

"Forever and a day, your

"DONALD."

XXII.

CONFISCATION.

FROM the beginning of the war, Theodora, thousands of other patriotic women, had been in habit of visiting the hospitals within her reach. uncle's family hardly came to town without brin something from the farm for the sick and wou soldiers, and often they left with her a basket of fruit handfuls of flowers from the garden, which it was a pleasure for her to distribute as she went through wards. A hotel on the river-bank, not far from Torringtons, had been appropriated as a military hos and the music-teacher loved, when she got home giving her lessons, to make up a tempting basket an down there, leaving a bunch of grapes with this suf two or three pears with that, a fragrant little bouquet another too sick to enjoy the eatables; saying words of good cheer with each.

It was not long before wounded soldiers from the side were brought in.

The first day Theodora saw any of them at the hos she mentioned it to Mrs. Torrington, and she immedi took a warm interest in them. She had never en the hospital before, but from that time on, when Sou soldiers were there, she was devoted in her kind atten The two often went together, and the common serv humanity drew them closely together; yet, in doi held them apart, for Mrs. Torrington had neve

expression of pity, nor a drop of cordial, to bestow upon a Union soldier.

One day Theodora had just come from the bedside of a brave man wasted almost to death with the sufferings of his prison life; her eyelashes were still wet with the feeling his patient heroism had stirred; she stopped for Mrs. Torrington, who was just taking leave of one of her protégés. He was a bright-looking young soldier, whose right arm had been shattered, and was to be amputated in the morning.

"The worst of it is, that hand can never draw a trigger again," he was saying as he looked pitifully down at his useless fingers.

"Brave boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Torrington warmly, "I only wish my son was old enough to take your place in the ranks!" Theodora noticed that her musical tones were louder than usual, and she understood it as she saw the glance of defiance shot with them, at a federal officer standing near, one whom they often saw at the hospital and both disliked. Theodora had nicknamed him Chanticleer, he had "such a strut and crow." He returned the look with one equally unfriendly, and the two ladies went away.

They found Mr. Torrington in the library looking over the evening mail. He listened with interest to his wife's glowing description of her new hero, and then went back to reading his Southern newspaper.

"That is good! I am glad somebody has the courage to say it out squarely," he remarked as he finished an editorial, and laid the paper on his knee with a nod of satisfaction.

"What is it, dear? Read it out."

He read: "The establishment of the Confederacy is a

distinct reäction against the whole course of the mistaken civilization of the age. For Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, we have deliberately substituted Slavery, Subordination and Government. That 'among equals, equality is right; among those who are naturally unequal, equality is chaos that there are slave races, born to serve, master races born to govern, such are the fundamental principle which we inherit from the ancient world, which we have lifted up in the face of a perverse generation which has forgotten the wisdom of its fathers."

"No person of sense can help seeing the justice of that I am sure," responded Mrs. Torrington.

"We 'll not say that," replied her husband, taking off his eye-glasses, and looking with a pleasant smile at Theodora. "I suppose our Young Yankee friend here thinks that is a shocking return to the dark ages, and she is a person of sense about most things."

"Thank you, Mr. Torrington," said the "Young Yankee," with an answering smile. "That does seem to me like setting back the world's clock two or three hundred years. I would have a government so free that every man could find the level he was 'born' for, and those who are 'naturally unequal' could fit into the inequalities of life according to Nature—not arbitrary rank. Mrs. Torrington, let me take your hat and shawl upstairs with mine, so that you needn't go up before tea; you look tired."

"You are very kind; I do dread the stairs, but my hair is falling down so that I don't see but I shall be obliged to go."

"Let me put it up for you." As she stood arranging the braids, she noticed Mr. Torrington opening an official looking document, among his letters, and his face grew

ing hard and stern, as if suddenly petrified, while he glanced over it. Without a word, he passed it to his wife. As she read it, her face flushed, and she clinched her white fist. Then she dashed the paper to the floor. From the torrent of wrath which she poured out, it was easy to gather that the offensive communication was a warning of confiscation.

As quickly as possible, Theodora fastened the last tress of hair, and silently passed out of the room. That was not a scene for any spectator. She had feared this very thing.

Some citizens who had made themselves obnoxious by giving aid and comfort to secession, had already been checked by arrest or the confiscation of property. Mr. Torrington was too honest and too proud a man to conceal his opinions; still he was naturally reserved and cautious, and he abhorred vulgar notoriety. He had proved his attachment to the cause by investing a large part of his property in Confederate bonds, but none of his neighbors would have known it if his wife had been as prudent as himself. For her, to feel and to speak were all one. A word of offence to the South would set her on fire, and then she would boast of their sacrifices in its interest. She delighted in making remarks like that at the hospital, where they would seem most defiant. Again and again, in her angry excitement, she had flung insults at the Union soldiers, which one, unfamiliar with the blood in her veins, would have said it was impossible for so high-bred a lady to offer to any one.

Theodora Cameron was by no means naturally cautious. To say what she thought, was nearly as strong an impulse with her as with Mrs. Torrington. But she had not the same fiery temper to curb; and her parents had taught

her well the old proverb: "You may tie a knot with your tongue you cannot untie with your teeth." Circumstances for the last two years had been giving her an effectual drill in self-control.

She loved the whole family of the Torringtons. She saw that a little indiscretion on her part might plunge them into serious difficulty. They were as unguarded in their remarks before her as they could be among themselves alone. In giving her lessons, she went from house to house among families violently opposed to each other on the Union question. She felt, herself, as intense devotion to the national cause as any of them. But she resolved, early in the war, that she would not repeat anything she heard said by her host or hostess about public affairs. By dint of great vigilance at first, and help of habit afterwards, she had kept the resolve, and in doing so had gained a self-mastery and candor of judgment which gave her power in after-years. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man and able also to bridle the whole body."

So now the crisis had come! The tea-bell was long delayed, and as she sat in her room watching the shadows creep over the river, she wondered what they would do. She was certain Mr. Torrington would not avoid confiscation by taking the oath of allegiance. She supposed he would do as others had done, take his family away, and leave his house, as it was, to the Federal authorities. In the course of the evening, however, she could see, as his wife plied him with questions, and expressed her indignation, that he was divided between dread of coming into collision with men he despised, and the pride which said, "Let them come and take it, I'll not budge." Evidently, he was loth to believe they would actually interfere

rith a man of his character and standing. Caro was rightened, and urged they should go. Aleck scorned he idea, and just wished a Confederate army would narch up that way, and give those impudent, woolly-eaded Republicans a lesson! As they were talking, here came a crash against the parlor windows as of fifty gg-shells breaking at once, and the sound of something rickling down on the outside. Then an awful groan rom many voices. Mobbed! Mr. Torrington's face was hite, as his eyes met his wife's at the sound, and he aid, "This decides it; I am not to be driven out of my ome by a dirty mob."

Theodora felt consumed with shame. Why need a oble cause be degraded by such a vile following as that abble! After a few minutes of groaning and insolent ries, they passed on to pay their respects at other houses hose masters had been offensive as secession-sympahizers. Caro was crying, and clinging to Theodora in right. Mrs. Torrington was wild with nervousness and xcitement. She blamed the most respectable and conientious Unionists in the city, as if they personally had een throwing rotten eggs at the windows.

"Aren't you proud of your friends, Miss Dora?" she aid, turning suddenly in her walk up and down the oom.

"The rabble don't much care which side they are on, o they can do mischief," she answered, putting aside the aunt. She could not help thinking that the lady's own assionate partisanship only needed to be transferred to ulgar minds to work up the maddest of riots.

The next day Mrs. Torrington was sick with a distracting headache, it seemed as if a fever might be coming on, nd Theodora put by some of her lessons and devoted

herself to her. She moved softly about the darkened room, ministering so skillfully and tenderly to the sufferer that, by evening, she turned her head on her pillow with a long sigh, opened her eyes languidly, and said the worst of it was over. She slept on a lounge in the room, and was often up in the night soothing and cooling the feverish pain. It was sweet to her in the morning, as she was bathing her patient, to have her say, with a grateful look:

"What a comfort you are!"

A few days later, came a Saturday which she had promised to spend at her uncle's. Mrs. Torrington was well again, and all went on as usual, except that they were looking to see what each day would bring forth.

"The Black Prince" had been kindly placed at Theodora's service, soon after she came, for every Saturday that she chose to go to Esmadura, and Mr. Torrington seemed happy to have her avail herself of it. He had a fancy that it did the creature good to spend a day frequently in the fresh air and green pastures on the hills.

It was delicious to get out of the smoky town, out of the home atmosphere of disquiet, into the freshness and freedom of the open country—the peace and sympathy of her uncle's house.

Mr. Bradley took the trouble of his old friend very much to heart. "It is his own fault," he said. "A man who won't own allegiance to his own government deserves to be treated like an alien enemy; but tell Torrington my house is open to him and his, day and night, whenever I can serve him."

"Why, husband," said Mrs. Bradley, "the same house wouldn't hold you and Mrs. Torrington half an hour."

"If she was my guest, it would," he answered; and Theodora believed he would have made it good.

"I think you had better just stay with us," said her Aunt Margaret. "Trouble is coming, and it will be very disagreeable to be there. Why not let us just send back the horse, and say that I wanted to keep you a few days?"

"I think I'd better go, auntie. I don't want to desert them, and it is possible I can be of some service to them."

She found herself too tired to go to church that Sunday. In the morning, she lay on the bed in the large, pleasant guest-chamber, and by turns read the Bible and thought, while her eyes rested on the heavy fringes of a Norway spruce, in contrast with the cedar-boughs next it. She loved these trees in her uncle's yard, because they had a fragrance of New England woods. She seemed to go home again and gather strength for whatever might be coming. She strengthened herself with the First Epistle of Peter, and felt ready for whatever might come.

They all came out to the horse-block to see her off the next morning, and her uncle repeated his message to Mr. Torrington: "Tell him my latch-string is always out for them to come and stay as long as they please."

As she rode off, they shouted after her: "Expect to see you back soon. Come home if you have any trouble. Don't wait to be taken up for a vagrant."

As she rode down the hill, the morning mists were creeping up the valleys below her and blending with the smoky haze of the wakening city. Together they threw a gauzy veil over the scene which enhanced its beauty. By the time she reached the 'pike, the air was clear. The Black Prince cantered gaily on towards home, and she talked to him about all the charming times they had had together, from the time Di Vernon used to go neck

to neck with him, up to this present. He seemed to it all in, and say, "You shall have the best ride yet morning." Up the long, steep hill, with its stone pet on one side, which leads into the city, he went, his quick, elastic walk, then down a descent, arou corner, and dashed up to his own door in fine style, ping exactly at the stepping-stone, and announcing self with a proud snort. At that moment, a soldie his hand on the Black Prince's bridle, and his ride another standing in the door of the house.

"What does this mean?" she asked, as she s from the saddle.

"I suppose it means, for one thing, that this fin mal belongs to Uncle Sam."

"You are not going to take him right away?"

"As soon as I get orders," answered the man, no towards the house.

She hurried in. The parlor, she saw in passing occupied by a soldier lolling in the best velvet easy with one leg swinging over the arm of it.

She tapped at the library-door, and it swung op her touch. Mr. Torrington, with an expressio haughty composure on his face, was at the table, ing up some papers, while an orderly stood by, lo on.

"Can I speak with you a moment, Mr. Torringt she said, going up to him.

"If this gentleman can have the pleasure of listen he replied, with sarcastic politeness.

The orderly was a pleasant-looking young man, evidently did not like his errand. He folded his and walked to the window, where he stood with his to them.

"*Must* they take the Black Prince?" asked Theodora, in a low, anxious voice.

"They must take whatever they please," he answered aloud, growing even paler than before.

"One thing more," said Theodora. "I had a message for you. Uncle Bradley charged me to tell you that his latch-string was out for you and yours, day and night, and as long as you please." She spoke warmly, with her eyes raised to his, and tears gathering in them. The red flushed around his eyes and mouth, but he waited a moment, till he could speak without betraying emotion, before answering:

"Your uncle is a gentleman, and a true friend. Tell him I shall never forget his kindness; but I shall not be obliged to trespass upon it. I am sorry, Miss Dora, that your home here is disturbed; but I hope you may find a pleasanter one elsewhere," he added, with his usual dignified politeness. "I will remit whatever is due you, if you will leave the address with me."

"Don't speak of it, Mr. Torrington; it is nothing," she said, hurt that he should suppose she could think of it at such a time. She left the room, and went upstairs, where she heard Mrs. Torrington's voice. To her dismay, she saw the Chanticleer standing beside her. Why need it be he, to exasperate the offence! Even then she could not help thinking how splendidly the lady looked. She was in a morning-robe of rich cashmere. She had been interrupted at the toilet, and her black hair was pushed back and hanging loosely about her face. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes flashing. Evidently, she had been giving the Chanticleer "a piece of her mind"; and he, as if to show himself unabashed by it, wore a more pompous air than ever. They were walking

along the hall from the door of Mrs. Torrington's room to Miss Cameron's, which the officer, with a slight tap, threw open. He gave a low whistle as he glanced around the room.

"How is this? United States flag! Honest Abe!"

Upon this, Caro, who, as it appeared, was crouched on an ottoman in the farthest corner of the room, with the twins beside her, straightened herself up and said, "This is Miss Cameron's room; and she is a good Unionist; and you oughtn't to touch her things, whatever you do."

He turned, and saw Theodora, whom Mrs. Torrington, in her excitement, had not noticed, standing almost at her elbow. He looked at her steadily.

"Isn't this the young lady who visits our hospital so much?"

"Yes, it is," said Caro, coming forward. "That is Miss Cameron, and she is a Vermonter, and she has two brothers in your army, and she is all the time doing something for your soldiers."

Chanticleer bowed low to Miss Cameron.

"We respect that flag," said he, with a grand wave towards it. "I will endeavor to see that this room is not disturbed."

He passed on to another apartment; but Mrs. Torrington turned fiercely upon Theodora. "So, *that* is the meaning of your signal! I was a fool to suppose I could take a Yankee into my house without finding her a traitor! I only wish I had torn down your hateful flag, as I had a notion to, when I first saw it there. I might have suspicioned the whole thing! Was it not enough," she added, in a sharper tone, "to post your signals for your friends, without setting my daughter to watch over your precious effects?"

"Mother!"

"Mrs. Torrington!"

From the two mouths burst the same tone of reproach. Theodora said nothing more. The accusation was too absurd. But Caro stood before her mother, looking like a miniature of herself, and repelled her insinuations hotly.

"Why, Mother Torrington! you know it is no such thing. It is just a flag Miss Dora's brothers and sisters gave her for a birth-day present, and she put it up the very evening she came back. Indeed, she never said one word to me about coming in here. I just came because I was that frightened I didn't know any place else to go. I felt safer in the room with the flag; so I took Pinky-Winky in here with me. Indeed, mamma, you have no right to speak so to her!"

"Careful, Caro! careful!" said Theodora, almost in a whisper.

That seemed to exasperate Mrs. Torrington the more.

"Teach her how to treat her mother, will you, before my very face. I shall be able to dispense with your aid in the instruction of my children hereafter. Whatever they know, they shall know no more of treacherous Yankees."

She swept off, with the air of an incensed Duchess; the twins trotting after her, and breaking the majesty of her movements by hanging to her skirts and making her trip slightly. She went into her own chamber, slammed the door, and a moment after was heard by those without in hysterical sobs.

Aunt Phillis came up the stairs, wiping her eyes on her apron, saying:

"Where be them blessed babies? Where's Missis?"

She went into the room, but came out again in a moment, the ends of the red bandanna knotted around her head, quivering with agitation.

"What ever be we going to do! Massa says for us all to be ready for to go at one o'clock. I tell him we couldn't any ways get to go so quick, but he said the carriage would be to the door and go we must, ready or not ready. Now, yere's Missis on the bed, cryin' fit to kill, so I never let on what I came to tell her. She can't do nothin', poor dear; but I 'low what Massa says has got to be did, *somehow*."

Theodora thought so too. Mr. Torrington always knew what he was about. The furniture was confiscated with the house, but the ward-robe of the whole family was to be packed and ready to go by one o'clock. It was almost ten already. Plenty of work for somebody!

"Deary me!" cried Aunt Phillis, throwing up her hands and heaving a tremendous sigh from her mountainous bosom. "I don't know which way to run, no more than a chicken with its head cut off!"

"I'll tell you, Aunt Phillis; have Cæsar bring all the trunks into the nursery. You gather up the clothes and bring them there. Violet can help you. And I will do the packing. Caro, you can mind your mother and the babies, can't you?"

"I will do the best I can, Miss Dora," answered Caro.

"First, you had better go down and order Chloe to have dinner an hour earlier than usual—a good, hot dinner."

"Now, a'n't you a blessin' from the Lord, Honey!" exclaimed Aunt Phillis. "I feel like you had set my head on my shoulders again. Mebbe we can do it."

In a few minutes the nursery was a labyrinth of trunks

and heaps of clothes. Theodora stood in the midst, working hard and fast to bring order out of chaos. It suddenly occurred to her that the squad on guard would be wanting their dinner at the house, and there would be a new embarrassment in the hurry of getting off. She went to find Chanticleer; he was stretched on the sofa in the parlor, but started up at her entrance.

"Would two o'clock be too late a dinner-hour to-day for you, sir?" she asked, as politely as possible.

"Oh, no, madam; suit your own convenience, certainly."

"And the guard?"

"No hurry about them. They are used to eating all hours, or going without, as it happens."

"They will not go without, of course." She knew soldiers could be trusted for that! "You shall all have a good dinner; but the family leave at one o'clock, and there is a great deal to be done first. So it will be all the better if you wait."

"Certainly, Miss, certainly; let me see," coming close to her and speaking low, "could you tell me where Mr. Torrington keeps his wines? I don't see any wine-cellar."

"He doesn't keep any, sir. He is a temperance man," she said, pointedly.

He looked annoyed that she did not answer in an undertone, as he had spoken. His purple complexion took a darker tinge. She thought, as she went out, if she had offended him, the family would suffer for it; so she held down her antipathy, and went back to lay two or three magazines on the table, remarking blandly: "I hope you will find something to amuse you while you wait."

He nodded, but was evidently in a state of disappointment.

She went back to the nursery, but as she went up the stairs, saw the orderly passing through the hall. She leaned over the balustrade to speak to him.

"This is a pretty hard thing for a family. You soldiers will make it as easy as you can for them, won't you?"

"Indeed we will that," said the young man, with feeling. "I just thought how I should feel if my father was in that old gentleman's place, till I could stand it no longer in there with him," nodding towards the library. "If there is anything I can do to help, just let me know."

Mrs. Torrington passed the morning in a state of excitement bordering on delirium. At one time, as Theodora was going through the hall, she heard the crash of glass in her room and then Mr. Torrington's tones in expostulation. A glance through the open door showed that a beautiful toilet set, which belonged on the bureau, had been dashed to atoms on the floor. "I would break everything in the house if I could. I wish I could set the house on fire!" she was saying. "To have these wretched Yankees wiping their feet on my lace curtains and looking at their ugly faces in my mirrors!" There came another crash—she had struck a curling-stick into the mirror.

"India!" exclaimed her husband, in a peremptory tone. "Remember you are a lady. We shall have the whole squad in here to look after the property."

In fact, the sound had brought Chanticleer out of the parlor, on to the stairs. Theodora hastened down to head him off. She persuaded him to go back, telling him Mr. Torrington would see to it that no further damage was done.

"They had better not go to smashing up things," said he, shaking his head ominously. "If they behave themselves, everything will go nice and smooth; but if they go to acting cantankerous, they will soon find the United States Government is too much for 'em."

"There will be no more trouble, I assure you," said Theodora. "Mrs. Torrington is hardly herself, this morning, but her husband will see that nothing of this kind happens again."

"He'd better; you tell him he'd better; 'cause if he can't take care of her, I *can*," he said, in a threatening tone. "She has been sassy enough to United States officers, and I'd jest like to show her the United States Guv'munt ain't to be trifled with."

"Indeed, she is learning that to her cost," said Theodora, trembling lest he should add some insult to the miseries of the day. "Victors can afford to be magnanimous," throwing a sop to his pride. "I am sure, sir, you are too much of a gentleman to add anything to the humiliation of this day."

Soothed by the touch of flattery, he sank back into an embroidered chair and looked placable, so that she ventured to leave him. Her conscience smote her mildly as she went back to her work, for she did *not* think he was "too much of a gentleman" to do any insolent thing he could think of to abase the proud lady who had affronted him more than once.

"Miss Dora, look here a minute," said Caro, putting her head into the nursery.

"I am in a terrible hurry, dear."

"Just a minute, quick, please."

She went with her and looked over the balustrade into the lower hall. Pinky-Winky had been dressed for

the journey, and turned loose to take care of themselves till the time came. Pinky was sitting on the lowest stair holding up before her "John Edward," her knit doll, talking to him.

"You are a yebel, John Ed'ard, and you will have to go to Yichmond. You can't stay in this house another single minute, and you can't caway 'way your hobby-horse, nor your bedstead, nor noffin at all. But don't you never mind. Don't you cwy one singul bit; 'cause you are a good true yebel, John Ed'ard."

While she was making these last remarks in a consolatory tone, they saw Winky trotting along the hall tugging her great yellow cat. His struggles to get into some tolerable position had pushed her little hat on one side. She stopped before the orderly, who was leaning against the parlor door-post, laughing to hear Pinky talk to her doll.

"Ith my kitty—fi—fi—fithticate?" she asked, looking earnestly into his face.

He went down on one knee and put his arms around her, kitty included.

"I don't much believe Uncle Sam will meddle with your pussy-cat. Do you want to take him with you?"

"Yeth; he wanth to go, Billy dosth. He can sit right on the seat in the carth. Aleck said he couldn't go, cauth he wath fithticated."

"Ain't you a jolly pair of little girls, though! Will you kiss me?"

She considered the subject a minute, looking straight into his pleasant face, then she put a sweet little kiss right under his mustache. Whereupon he took her up in his arms and promenaded the hall with her till the carriage came.

Theodora was on the floor before the fourth trunk,

when Cæsar swung the door open and announced: "The 'spress wagon have come for the baggage, Miss Dora."

"Very well; ask Mr. Torrington to come here a minute, will you?"

By the time he came, she had crowded the last thing into the trunk and was locking it.

She handed him the bunch of keys, saying, "I think, Mr. Torrington, everything is in these four trunks that will be needed for several weeks. That pile of winter clothing I can pack this afternoon, and have it stored or sent to you, as you think best."

He thought a moment, then answered, "I will have everything sent. I will leave nothing of mine in this contemptible town. I will not trouble you to attend to it, however. I will leave the address with Mr. Maynard."

"He is unwilling to trust me with their address," she thought, bitterly. "Would you like me to pack them before I go? Or will the Maynards attend to it?"

"Why—if it is not too much trouble, I should be glad to have you overlook it. Violet could do it, I suppose. Who packed all these? Not you?" He seemed suddenly struck with the fact that she looked tired and warm. "I supposed Phillis or Violet was doing it."

"Phillis picked up the things, but she would hardly know how to do the packing—at least in so short a time. Violet is no help to speak of."

The expressman was taking away the luggage, and Mr. Torrington hurried off to give him directions.

Theodora ran to her room to wash her hands and bathe her burning face. She was trembling with weariness and excitement. Caro followed her and threw herself on her neck in a passionate fit of crying.

"Oh, Miss Dora, I cannot leave you! I can't live

without you. I never can be good away from you. You don't know—" the rest of her words were washed away in a rain-storm of tears.

Theodora cried with her, kissed her again and again, stroked her hair, and held her close.

"If I could know you had begun to love the Saviour, darling, I could bear it better," she said, in an unsteady voice.

"Indeed, I do believe I was just beginning. But what can I do without you! I shall go all wrong and get to be that cross and hateful He will have to give me up." Another burst of weeping, but the heavy heart of her friend threw off a great weight. For this she had been praying and trying for two years—to win Caro to Christ.

"No, indeed, dear. If you are joined to Him you will do very well without me. Oh, I shall feel so safe and happy to know you are clinging to him. '*Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.*'"

Aleck knocked at the door. "Come, Caro, mamma says for you to come this minute. The carriage is here. Good-bye, Miss Dora. We will keep up our duets so as to play them to you when you come down to visit us in the Confederate States of America."

"Good-bye, Aleck. You and Caro must come and see me in the Green Mountain State when the Rebellion is over, and I will play you The Star Spangled Banner with variations."

"You will write to me, Caro?" said Theodora, as the went down the stairs with their arms around each other

"Yes, indeed, I shall be writing to you all the time, expect."

As she said it, they reached the foot of the stairs, when

her mother was standing. She turned a look of displeasure on Caro as she heard the words—shot a quick glance of cold anger at Theodora, drew her veil closely over her face, and went out, taking her husband's arm.

Not even a good-bye!

"She won't feel so long," whispered Caro, as she snatched a last kiss and ran after her.

Mr. Torrington stepped back, after placing his wife in the carriage, and shook hands, saying:

"I am very much obliged for your fidelity and kindness to my children, Miss Dora. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Honey," said Aunt Phillis, when he had gone out. "You's been a mighty great help in this yere house to-day. The good Lord knows it, whether any person else does or not."

"God bless you, Aunt Phillis! Good-bye, precious little Pinky."

The nurse had her by the hand; she took Theodora's tearful kisses with great composure, and held up her famous old doll.

"You may kiss John Ed'ard, 'cause he's going 'way off, and he a'n't coming back here any more."

"Tell Miss Dora what there would be if we should stay," said Aleck, who had come back to hurry them.

"There would be a yow, a yumpus, and a yiot!"

"Where is Winky? I haven't bid her good-bye."

"There; see?"

She was still in the arms of the soldier, the sleeve of her little white sack cuddled affectionately around the neck of the blue uniform. They were waiting in the yard for the baskets, satchels, and shawls to be stowed away in the carriage.

The little lady bent down from her high estate to kiss

Theodora good-bye, and seeing the tears on her cheeks, said, as she laid her head down again on the orderly's shoulder:

"Don't ye cwy, Mith Dowa; Winky lovth you."

That *was* a comfort: but how soon they would forget her—these little things!

At last all were in—the family and the nurse Cæsar got up with the coachman to see them off. Chloe and Violet were crying under a tree in the yard. Theodora leaned on the gate; the orderly stood with his cap off; his little pet kissed her hand to him as they moved away. "Miss Dora" caught a last look of love from Caro, but she saw that Mrs. Torrington did not turn her head for a parting glance at the house where all her happy married life had been passed. In a few days the furniture she had selected when a bride, her beautiful silver—old heirlooms and wedding presents—the children's crib, and the family portraits, would all be put up at auction.

XXIII.

TAKEN IN.

' was late in the next afternoon that an omnibus called at the deserted house to take our young lady her trunks down to the railroad. She left the train little station five miles out of town, where a simple :orm did duty as a depôt. There she left her trunk e charge of a man who ran the post-office, the rail- station, and a small all-kinds-of-goods store.

Any of uncle's family been down to-day?" she asked

Yes, Archie was here half an hour ago. They didn't ect you, did they? Won't be down again, likely. Hoyts were along with their express-wagon, going e from mill, a bit ago. Could have taken you as well ot. Have to foot it, I expect."

I am able to do that, luckily. It isn't more than two s and a half, I believe, though it is rather 'hard in' of yourself up the hill,' as old Jake says."

he had a very heavy heart to carry as she climbed the gh road.

ll the dear old times—the duets and the talks with . Torrington—the sunset reveries by the river window ie rides on Black Prince—the Winter evenings in the ary, when Mr. Torrington read aloud and talked de- ıtfully—Pinky-Winky, with their sweet absurdities— o, with her impulsive haughtiness and her passionate

love and repentance—Aleck's gay, boyish friendliness—all were over.

"That chapter of my life is ended," she thought; "I would not mind if they only were my friends; but, oh, to part like that. I can't stand it! I did love them so!"

When Mrs. Torrington had said unkind things to her in ill-temper before, she had controlled and comforted herself by recalling a hundred marks of confidence and love which she had given her in her truer moods. But to have this the *last!*

If youth is more hopeful than age, it is more hopeless, as well. When a storm of sorrow bursts on a young head, it is as if the sun and moon were blotted out for ever; but the older sufferer has seen daybreak after so many a black night, that he has learned to expect it.

She sat down to rest at her favorite "limestone rocks." A dense black smoke-cloud hung over the city, and drifted off in sombre phantoms towards the sky. A few degrees to the west of it, the sun was sinking in billows of glory. The forests had taken on shades of gold and of bronze that brought them into harmony with his magnificence. Only cool glimpses of the winding creek, and the sober green of hemlocks planted on an Indian mound, broke the lavish richness of color that flushed the skies rested on the valley, and mantled the swelling hills.

As she looked to the opposite side of the bridge, the grave blues and grays of the eastern clouds foreshadowed that night was soon to brood over woods and hamlet and the church-yard on the hill.

It was dark within doors but still twilight without when she reached the house. She could see the light from the sitting-room grate, through the window, but she

heard the voices of the girls in the cow-yard; so she walked on quietly and leaned over the fence. There were five cows in the yard. Kate was milking one, and Bessie another. Topsy, a bright and impish-looking black kitten, which the rest called Bessie's Familiar, was sitting up on her haunches under the cow, while her mistress milked into her mouth.

"There, Tops, that will do. I would give a good deal to know how Dora feels to-night, wouldn't you, Kate?"

"Indeed, I would!"

"How much?" called a voice from the fence.

"Why, you child, where did you come from!" cried Bessie, starting so suddenly that Bonny came near kicking over the pail, or the bucket, as they would have called it.

"We had no idea of being taken up so quick," said Kate, laughing; "but I'll give two cents out of the butter money, if Bess will. How *do* you feel, anyhow?"

"I feel like that old horse; where are the two cents?"

An old white horse, retired on a pension, stood on the top of the hill, like an equestrian statue, in bold relief against the dark sky, head and tail drooping as if there was not enough left in life to make him stir.

"You don't look much like him," said Bessie, taking up her milk-bucket and putting aside the milking stool.

"No," said Kate, following her out of the yard. "She looks uncommonly pretty with her cheeks so red, walking. But what has happened? do hurry and tell us all about it."

She went along with them to the stone milk-house; but as they passed the sitting-room window, saw her uncle sitting alone before the fire in the dusk.

"Let me run in and see uncle and aunt, and then when you are all ready to sit down, I will tell the whole story."

She stole quietly into the sitting-room, and st demurely, with folded hands and downcast eyes, beside uncle, who sat in a large rocking-chair gazing at blazing coals.

"Please, sir, could you take in a poor outcast for night? It is right chilly out of doors."

He did not look up till she began to speak; then it curious to see, as she glanced at him with mock shy how a comprehension of the case began to show its his mouth and spread over his face.

"Outcast, are you? Well, you look too likely a g be left out in the cold! We must take you in, to be s patting her on the shoulder. "Give me a kiss promise you shelter and rations."

Aunt Margaret came in from the kitchen, wher had been putting away the tea-things.

"Why, Dora, my child, is that you! did you down?"

"No, auntie, I walked up."

"Walked up, did you? Tired and hungry giving her a warm kiss of welcome. "You mus some supper, first thing."

"Could I have some baked apples and milk?"

"Yes; I baked a great tin full of nice sweet appl afternoon; I must have had a presentiment you coming."

"How nice! Let me run out to the milk-hous get a bowl of milk from Kate, and I am all rig sha'n't want anything else."

When the lamps were lit and the family gat around the fire, Theodora sitting next to her uncle s he should hear it all, told the story of the confis interrupted by many questions and comments

Finally old Jake, who had his accustomed corner by the fireside, burst into a chuckling laugh. Everybody looked at him in surprise.

"It just does me good to see these big-bugs tooken down," he explained; "I just hope right smart of um will be confiscated."

"I don't see what grudge you have against Mr. Torrington, Jake," said Bessie.

"Oh, nothin' p'tic'lar; only he's so mighty proud. I seen him one day last Spring come drivun down yere, in a little open buggy all shinin', with them prancin' grey horses o' hisen. They come to that place down yender, where the run riz over the road, ye mind, after that big rain. It hadn't been down more'n two days, and the mud was tole'ble sticky, I tell you. His span, they flounced into it, but gettin' out wasn't that easy. Fust he knew, they was stalled in it. I was up in the sugar camp carryin' sugar-water, and I just looked out ahint a tree and seen it all. I tell ye, it was victuals and drink to me to see how kind o' helpless he looked sottun up there with his broadcloth 'n his shiny buggy all spattered, and his fine greys a whiskun their tails, and steppun, and plungun in deeper every time. Every little while he'd hit um a lick an' they'd start like they was riled, but they wouldn't pull a speck more. I didn't know but he was agoun to set there agin the mud dried up, and thinks I, 'You may, old feller, for all o' me;' but finally he brung hisself to ut, and jumped out. You'd ought t' 'ave saw his paytent leather gaiters, plump down in that mud! he was over shoe-mouth fust thing, and I just thought his white socks wouldn't look so mighty fine when he driv back to town." Jake shook with inward laughter at the recollection.

"Well, how did the horses get out?" asked Archie.

"Oh, he coaxed um, an' patted um, and give um a han'ful o' grass, he did *so!* An' when they got ready they gin a good pull, an' come out."

"Now, Jake, what was there so very funny in all that," asked Kate; "suppose your mules had got stalled when you were hauling logs, and Mr. Torrington had stood behind a tree, laughing at you, all the time, instead of coming near to help you; what would you think of him?"

"Oh, but that's different!"

"I don't see it."

"Which?"

"I don't see where the difference is."

"Why, he feels so proud and stuck up, you know, with his grand house, and fine clothes, and horses, and things."

"How do you know he is?" asked Theodora.

"Oh—*I* know."

"*How* do you know?"

"Jake judges by himself, likely," said Archie; "he knows he would feel stuck up if he had all those things, so he takes it for granted other folks do."

"*Course* he is."

"Now, Jake, did you ever speak with Mr. Torrington?"

"Me? Not much!"

"Well then, I have been in his family two years, and ought to be better acquainted with him than you are, and it is my judgment that he is no more proud of his house than you are of your melon patch. As to his good clothes, is there any virtue in old clothes? If one's business allows it, and he has the money to pay for them, why shouldn't he wear good clothes? I am sure I like the looks of them, and I don't see why you shouldn't. I

think there is a cruel lack of charity in the poor towards the rich," she added, borne on to say more than she meant to. "They just make up in their own minds a set of hateful feelings, pride and contempt, and vanity, and fasten them onto everybody that happen to live in a certain style. They accuse them of getting things to 'make a swell,' when they just get them because they are convenient or pretty to have; and they take it for granted a lady is trying to 'show off' her finery when she is thinking no more about it than a red-bird thinks of his gay feathers. Rich people get elegant things, and wear and use them just because they *are* elegant, and they admire them, and poor people sneer and grumble, as if they got them just on purpose to spite them."

"But don't you think, Dora, the rich ought to consider the poor, and not indulge themselves in so many elegancies, while others are lacking the very necessaries of life?" asked Mrs. Bradley.

"Yes, auntie; but then, the poor ought to consider how many of the rich started on the very same level as they, and have made a fortune just by working while they slept."

"I believe there is a good deal in that," said Bessie. "It seems as if a man that was temperate, and healthy, and industrious, and just tolerably smart, needn't to be very poor in this country."

"How was it, uncle, with Mr. Torrington? Did he inherit his money?"

"No; there used to be property in the family; when they first came over from England, they owned large plantations in Old Virginia; but his grandfather was a Tory in the Revolution, and finally went over to England, and entered the British service, so that his estates were confiscated by the Continental Congress."

"Is that so?"

"Then, his son, this Hugh Torrington's father, came back after the war was over, and spent everything he had trying to get them back. He died when Hugh was a small boy, and he had nothing to start on but his good blood and brains."

"So he has just built up his prosperity by good solid work!" exclaimed Theodora, her admiration for him going up a notch higher yet.

"Work!" growled old Jake, incredulously.

"Yes, indeed, Jake, good hard work. Working with one's head, as he does, is enough harder than working as you do, and he keeps at it a farm hand's hours, too I have no doubt he often does more work in a week than you do in a month."

"Then, Jake," said Will, laughing, "wouldn't you like a candle to go to bed with?"

"I b'lieve I might as well. These girls is rather savage on me, a'n't they?"

The girls bid him good-night, with good-natured smiles as he went off, and Theodora called after him:

"Next time you see a gentleman's horses stalled in the mud, don't stand behind a tree and laugh at him, unless you'd like to be served the same way."

"We haven't heard yet what you have been doing since the family went away, yesterday noon," said Mrs. Bradley. "You'd better tell your story through."

"After they were gone, I wanted to have had a good cry, but I couldn't stop. I found Violet and Chloe were all attention to the 'so'jers' as soon as the family were gone. So I didn't feel any care about dinner. I went back to the nursery, and packed the rest of the things I was tired enough to drop on the floor when I was done.

"The soldiers enjoyed the luxuries of the house to the full. It did exasperate me to have Chanticleer settle down in Mrs. Torrington's own room for the night! I hope she will never hear of it. However, I was very civil to him, for I had an axe to grind. I held him to his promise to spare the furniture of my room, and left it in Cæsar's care to be boxed and stored for Mrs. Torrington. To-day I ran around and saw all my music scholars, gave a lesson wherever it was needed, hurried home to pack my own trunk, and got the last thing in after the omnibus was at the door. So I hadn't time for many last fond looks at the poor, dear, deserted old home. I took my satchel in hand, and started out like a pilgrim and a stranger."

"But you knew you had a place of refuge," said Aunt Margaret.

"And you shall be just as welcome here as one of our own children," said Uncle Graham, closing his large warm palm over her hand, which lay on the arm of his chair.

Theodora's tear-springs were much more easily opened by kindness than rudeness, and it was a minute or two before she could speak.

"I felt as if I must come up here and get comforted, and see what you thought better to do."

"Couldn't you give all your lessons in two days of the week?" asked Bessie, who, though the youngest sister, was called "the planner" in the family.

"I suppose so, now Aleck and Caro are gone, and Kitty Maynard is to stop. There is another thing that stung me; when I was there this morning, Mr. Maynard said he hardly supposed I should think of going on, now my principal patrons were driven away; at any rate, it would not be convenient for Kitty to continue; she was delicate,

and they did not like her to be pinned down to the piano. She *is* delicate, but no more so than when she began taking lessons. He saw the Torringtons off, and I can't but think she put that idea in his head. I don't know as it is worth while to stay at all. You know several Union families dropped me this Summer because I was staying with the Torringtons; and now if all the Southern sympathizers are going to give me up because I am not staying with them, I shall be stranded. Still, I have enough scholars left to finish up my piano money by Christmas, if the board does not eat up too much of it."

"You must stay here and be one of our children till that time," said her aunt, "and we will send you into town twice a week to give your lessons."

"Oh, that would be delightful for me, but altogether too much trouble for you."

"No, indeed," they all protested; "try it and see!"

"It is no more than I should like your father and mother to do for one of my children in the same circumstances," said her uncle.

"Nor more than they would love to do."

"Well, then, let us consider it settled."

"You ought to have 'Come ye disconsolate' painted over your front door, uncle. Here are old Jake, and three-legged Towser, and me, the present vagrants settled down on your bounty, and I have heard enough of your family history to know there is an unfailing succession of them."

"Where do you say Torrington has gone?" he asked, smiling, and taking a pear from the dish Bessie was passing around.

"That's one thing that hurts me, uncle; they didn't tell me where they were going."

"Then there's no doubt they are bound for Richmond."

"You think so?"

"Yes. You needn't take it unkindly that he didn't tell you; he did well to tell nobody, if he was going there. Strange, a man of such sense as Torrington cannot see that secession is wrong!"

"And he wonders that such a sensible man as Bradley sees it is right."

"I suppose so; well, the future will judge between us."

In a few days Theodora was domesticated at Esmadura, taking her part in "co-operative housekeeping," and entering into the simple rural life with no little zest.

Meanwhile, new movements in the Army of the Potomac stirred new hopes and fears, both North and South. A change of commanders and re-organization of troops seemed to portend that blood was to flow once more before Winter shut the two armies into their lairs.

One day, near the middle of December, Theodora received a hasty note from Donald, saying:

"We are glad of one more chance before going into winter-quarters. We are bound to conquer, and we have high hopes the time has come. We are just about breaking camp, so this is my good-bye till after the battle. I will not disgrace you, Theodora. I shall remember that 'a dead lion is better than a living dog;' though I hope to be neither. Come what will, I am glad to suffer and to do for our country and her future. You will pray for me, and your prayers will come down in blessings on

"YOUR SOLDIER BROTHER."

Donald Cameron had not a drop of game-cock courage

in his veins. For that very reason, perhaps, he h extravagant admiration of it. From his childhoo whether it was the story of David and Goliah, or Chase, or Robin Hood, or fierce Achillas and Hec the glancing plume, nothing stirred his blood lik reckless daring which exults in danger and flings de at death. He felt, sometimes, as if he would gi whole college course if he could buy the reckless hood of Jim Bangs, who seemed to find only a pl excitement in a hail-storm of bullets. Yet all th ment knew the young lieutenant for one of their b officers. Conscience and imagination were the feet his courage. He was keenly sensitive to pain, bc himself and others; every nerve plead to be let of the field of carnage with its horror and disgust, b will never flinched. The very existence of his c was in danger; it was his duty to fight; and he like a hero. In fact, being jealous of himself, he himself into the thick of danger, where one who l question of his own courage would have spared h

The second day after receiving his letter, Th went into town to give her music-lessons. Altho was the fifteenth of December, the day was so mi she chose to go once more on horseback. She felt long ride would brace her quailing heart. The mc heard and read, the more she realized the risks of and she felt greater fear for her brothers than whe first went into the war.

By the middle of the afternoon, she had finish work and was mounted for home. As she turn the main street, she saw, by the groups of men i of the bulletin-boards, that the clash of arms had She rode up to the side-walk, where an urchin w

ing, "Three 'clock 'dishin!" and challenged him to stand and deliver. As soon as the paper was hers, she cantered briskly out of town. Once on the open road, she hung the bridle on the saddle horn and let her nag pace along at pleasure, while she devoured the news. Presently Elfie pricked up her ears, and started forward at an exclamation which she supposed was meant for her; but it was only an outburst of impatience from her rider. She was reading how the Union army, all ready for action, stood champing its bit on the north shore of the Rappahannock, while the enemy rallied their forces and sowed the opposite bluffs with death and destruction—all because the pontoon-bridges, promised a month before, were not forthcoming. She checked the horse to a walk, and went on reading how those dauntless hosts hurled themselves against those blazing heights, only to be dashed back, shattered like the waves, yet like the waves gathering themselves again for a fresh assault. She leaned her elbow on her knee, her chin in her hand, and rode slowly forward, gazing into the distance, unseeing. It was the old story over again, of lavish heroism spent in vain. Rivers of blood, and both armies where they were before. Was Donald's blood in the tide?

At length, she brushed away a tear, sat up straight, drew the rein, and put Elfie into a rapid canter. As her hoofs beat their dactyls along the hard, smooth road, things began to look brighter; Donald had come out safely before—he would again. First accounts were apt to be exaggerated; perhaps the losses were not so terrible after all. God would bring good out of the evil somehow. Though the field was lost, all was not lost. The country would be purified and ennobled by all the patriotic sacrifices. The spirits which cannot be raised by a

swift canter through the fresh, cool air, with a noble mountain horizon in view, must be lower than Theodora's often sank. As Elfie turned from the macadamized turnpike to climb the rough road up the hills, through the forest, she set herself at it with such cheery resolution that her rider entered into her spirit, and began to feel as if she could do or bear anything. Horses have a good deal of influence over us. How can a man that drives a lazy, grudging shirk of a beast keep the same temper of mind as one who has before him a living example of pluck and patience in the very creature that draws him?

The next day, and the next, and the next, Theodora said to herself that she must not expect to hear from Donald. The day after came a letter and paper from home. The paper reported the Vermont brigade as losing at Fredericksburg, 26 killed, 141 wounded, 2 missing. The letter from her father only said what she was continually saying to herself, "We must commit our dear one to the God of battles; we hear nothing yet." Another day wore on, and she told herself, "No news is good news; he is too busy to write. If anything had happened some of them would have telegraphed." The following day was Sunday, when there was no mail; so she looked forward to Monday with doubled hope.

She stood at the door, watching for her cousin Will to come back from the post-office. The house stood a little below the summit of the hill it was on, so that the first glimpse of people coming in that direction was to be had only a few rods from the house, as they came over its crest.

"There are Elfie's ears," she said to her cousin Bessie, who stood with her arm around her. "I know, by the droop of them, Will hasn't any letter."

Sure enough, as he rode up he shook his head.

"I believe the letter has been miscarried," said Bessie; as everybody says, and nobody believes, when a longed-for missive fails to come.

"Oh, yes," said Theodora; "I wonder they ever find their way out of the army."

She went bravely back to her sewing, on the lounge beside her aunt, while the cousins began to talk, in their kind, cheering way—Kate declaring she should go to the post-office herself, to-morrow, and she should be sure to get something; she always did.

All at once, the poor child burst into a wild passion of tears. In an instant, her aunt was pressing her head against her motherly bosom, saying:

"Don't cry, dear! There, there, don't cry. You will hear good news to-morrow, I hope."

"I know it, auntie," she gasped. "It isn't that I think anything has happened to him; only, somehow, I couldn't help it;" and her shoulders heaved with the effort to hold down the sobs.

"'Hope deferred' made your 'heart sick,' didn't it, poor child! Well, cry away all you want to; maybe it will do you good."

The two girls stole quietly away, and left her to have it out in their mother's kind arms. They knew that was a good place.

After a while, the fit of weeping spent itself, and she felt as much better as the sky seems to feel after a good shower. She came near breaking down again when they went out to tea, and she found the girls had made coffee, and opened a can of their choicest seckel pears.

"You are going to stay me with coffee, and comfort me with pears, aren't you, girls?" she said, between laughing and crying.

Tuesday, Kate went to the office, and, as she had ised, held up a letter as she came in sight; but she out, as soon as she came within hearing, "It's only your father."

Theodora took it with a faltering heart-beat, an up to her room, to read it alone.

They had received a letter from the chaplain of ald's regiment. He wrote that the captain had be abled early in the engagement, so that Lieut. Ca was in command of the company most of the day. had fought nobly, till, about sunset, in making a they suffered terrible havoc, and the lieutenant h been seen since. "Still," the chaplain said (a father had copied his words), "I cannot give him killed. I went over the field that night, doing could for the wounded; and, the next day, when learned that he was missing, I took one of his re with me to the very spot where that charge was The ground was piled with the dead and wounde we made thorough search, and found no eviden your son was among them. It is true, dear broth in many cases it would have been impossible to i the body; yet I cannot but hope Lieut. Cameron there. Let us trust that the Lord of hosts has safe keeping, even though a prisoner, and will yet him to you. There is not a young man in the re who would be more missed. His charming social ties, activity, and bravery made him a favorite wit officers and men, and his high Christian characte him an influence we can ill afford to spare."

"This is all we know," her father wrote. "Li dying, he is the Lord's, and we can only commit the love of that Father who never loses sight

children. We long to have you with us in this dark hour, my dear child; but I would not have you come unless it is best for you. I have written to the chaplain and the colonel, asking them to inform us at once if they are able to get any further information. There seems to be nothing more we can do at present but to stay ourselves upon our God, and wait. In the last precious letter we had from the dear boy, he said: 'The eternal God is my refuge. I can never get beyond His care. So you must not be anxious about me, my blessed father and mother.' Oh, what a joy and hope he was to us all!"

"He is not dead!" Theodora said to herself; feeling as if an actual physical weight was taken off from her heart. It sprang up with a bound. He would come home safe yet!

She ran downstairs to read the letter, with a face so bright that the family were disappointed enough when they heard how dubious the news was, after all. The best that could be hoped for seemed to be a living death in one of those awful prisons. But Love and Hope had full possession of the sister's heart, and turned out every foreboding like a traitor.

"He is taken prisoner," she said, "and prisoners are being exchanged all the time. You see, the chaplain says they made thorough search, and, if Donald had been on the field, they would surely have found him."

"But, you know, my dear," said her aunt, who felt as if it would only be a long-drawn agony to watch and wait in vain, "you know they cannot always tell—as he says."

"Oh, but, auntie, they could tell Donald. He always had his pockets full of papers, and things any one could

tell him by. His under-clothes were all marked, and so were his pocket-book and his knife."

The words were confident, but there was such an undertone of dread beneath them, that no one suggested again the shocking possibility that the dear form was torn past recognition.

Theodora felt that she must go home at once. She did not disguise from herself that if her brother was a prisoner, as she hoped—since there was nothing less dreadful to hope for—it must be weeks, if not months, before his release could be brought about. In the meanwhile, they needed her at home. Her father, full of courage and fortitude for himself, was always tortured with anxiety if his children were in trouble. Her mother would be sure to believe the worst, though she bore it like a saint. As for Faith, she always looked things in the eye, just as they were. If imagination created no terrors for her, neither did it veil any. Theodora did not put it in words, but she felt that her obstinate, audacious hopefulness would stay up their sinking spirits. It had been a question whether it was worth while to stay for the few pupils she had left, and this decided it. She would go home.

XXIV.

NO NEWS.

OUR homeward-bound traveler was comfortably settled, with her shawl-strap beside her; but as they approached Philadelphia the cars began to fill so rapidly that she saw she could not have the luxury of a seat to herself. She had no ambition to be one of those women who "engage" a seat to some invisible "friend" and stab with their eyes every person that inquires about it. She preferred to choose her companion, however, and took up her shawl at the approach of a pale little widow, with a bouncing baby in her arms. The woman looked pleased, but with a baby on one arm and a satchel on the other, she could not get on very fast; and before she reached the seat, a man coming from the opposite direction took it. Theodora looked at him in surprise and vexation; but he was gazing serenely into the distance, with his chin uplifted at such a self-satisfied angle that she did not venture to protest.

She saw by his shoulder-straps that he was a Major, and was all the more provoked at his rudeness.

The widow stopped in the aisle, disconcerted; but a shaggy-haired, roughly-dressed countryman rose and gave her his seat. She thanked him so heartily, that he answered:

"'Ta'n't nothin'. Women folks a'n't so well able to stand as we be, let alone the little feller."

The Major threw himself back in his corner of the seat, and Theodora felt his eyes running all over her. Then

he began to "trim himself;" stroked his whiskers, passed his thumb under his overhanging mustache to right and to left, as if to be sure it was still there; felt of his hair, drew his thumb and fore-finger down the ridge-pole of his nose, to remind himself of its elegant outline; rested upon it a moment, picked out his neck-tie, took a furtive glance at his watch-chain, which was showing itself at the best advantage; pulled down his vest, adjusted his military cape to droop from his shoulder like a Spanish Don's. His uniform creaked with newness when he moved. While his right hand was busy most of the time in these interesting little occupations, his left arm lay along the back of the seat, so that the young lady could not make herself comfortable without leaning against it. If she turned at all, she found his disagreeable eyes fixed upon her, and met an atmosphere charged with tobacco-smoke, flavored with brandy. There seemed nothing to do but sit bolt upright and look out on the dreary prospect of muddy ground, mottled with snow. Finally, her seat-mate rested his elbow on the back of the seat before them and leaned forward, so as to look her in the face.

"You seem to find the view very attractive outside," he remarked, in a tone meant to be both ironical and insinuating.

"No, sir; only more so than that inside," she retorted, coldly, turning her eyes full upon him for a moment.

Upon that, he snorted slightly, raised his eyebrows, shrugged his shoulders, and let her severely alone, devoting himself to the culture of his mustache, with evident contempt for any young lady who did not appreciate his charms. He was more agreeable in this congealed state, and Theodora began to amuse herself, as usual, studying her fellow-passengers.

As they ran into the depôt at Philadelphia, the most noticeable person in the waiting crowd was a tall, remarkably handsome woman, perhaps thirty-five years old, who was walking up and down, with a Colonel on one side of her and a Captain on the other. Theodora could hear no words, but she was fascinated in watching the changing expression and graceful gestures of the lady, along with the devoted attentions of the two gentlemen. She was telling some story, as it seemed, and addressed herself now to one and then the other, quite impartially. But now came up a Brigadier, in all the glory of sash and sword and starry shoulder-straps. He greeted the lady gallantly, giving a passing salute to the younger officers. After shaking her hand warmly, he drew it within his arm and walked on with her, while the Colonel and Captain hid their diminished heads and walked after, one carrying her shawl, and the other her traveling-basket, exchanging with each other, as Theodora could see, glances of chagrin and amusement. The locomotive was puffing and screeching, by this time, but the lady moved on towards the train, with her convoy, as deliberately as if no engine would have the effrontery to go off without her. She came into the car, chatting with the General, the other satellites meekly following with her things. There was no vacant seat, but she glanced over the car like a queen, for whom there is a place, of course. The Major sprang to his feet and called out, with a grand flourish:

"Here, General; allow me to give your lady a seat."

The General thanked him, and the lady nodded indifferently as she took it. As soon as she was seated, the Brigadier took leave, saying: "It is too bad, Mrs. Arden, you should be taking this journey alone. If I

were not bound to go back to Washington to-morrow, you shouldn't do it."

The two younger officers lingered after he was gone, though the bell was ringing, and timed their departure, so as to show their coolness and agility by stepping from the train after it had started, and bowing gracefully to her afterward. It is easy to see that men are made out of the little boys that delight in running across the street in front of horses.

The Major was officiously anxious to do something for the General's friend. Would she like the window up? Would she like the shade down? Would she not allow him to be of any possible service he could render? It must be very unpleasant for ladies to travel alone!

She bowed carelessly, and replied: "I dare say I shall not require any assistance," in a tone which civilly dismissed him from existence, so far as she was concerned.

Theodora was thinking—"How much more neatly she quenched him than I did! I let him see that he had disturbed me—she just ignores him;" when the lady turned to her, with a pleasant smile and some trifling remark that led on to conversation, and in a few minutes she learned that this elegant woman was the wife of a Boston artist, who had been out as a volunteer nurse in the army. Then she was all eagerness to hear everything, and Mrs. Arden was lured along by the enthusiastic face turned toward her, to tell a great deal of her eventful experience.

"I saw the whole of this last battle," she said, at last.

"Oh, do tell me everything!"

"Then I must tell you, in the first place, how I happened to be there. Through a misunderstanding with the surgeon in charge, the care of a hospital I was to have had was given to the Sisters of Charity. So I was free

I knew there was to be a battle, and I was bound to get near the field. But the lines were drawn very strictly. No woman was allowed to go over them. I saw this official and that, and they all said it could not be done. So I decided to go at once to headquarters. I called on Mr. Lincoln, and told him I wanted to go to the front. He said, 'Why, madam, I could more easily make you a member of Congress than send you to the front.' I told him I had no doubt I should make a very good member of Congress, but that wasn't what I wanted. 'As likely as not you would be taken prisoner down there,' said he. 'Very well,' said I; 'then I will work for you among the rebels.' 'But there's going to be fighting, and you might be killed.'

"Then I told him I would rather be killed down at the front among brave men than live among cowards and schemers in Washington. He laughed at that—turned to his table and wrote a note to the Surgeon-General, and gave me. It said: 'You see her and hear her talk, and if you have no objection, tell the Secretary I should like him to give her a pass.'"

"See her and hear her talk!" thought Theodora. "He knew what that meant! No man could withstand her!"

"So I went to see the Surgeon-General and Secretary, armed with my note, and the result of it was that the next day my friend Mrs. Murray and I were settled at the Lacy House, right opposite Fredricksburg. From the piazza, we could see the crossing of the army and all the movements of troops. It was a magnificent sight, I can tell you—that great army pouring past from morning till night, all day, Thursday and Friday. They shook the ground with their steady tread, and they looked as if nothing on earth could withstand them. Saturday morn-

ing, the artillery from the other side came roaring throug the fog, and we knew it had begun. About eleve o'clock, the fog lifted, and then we could see the gran charges our troops made. It seemed as if they mu carry everything before them. Then we would see th brave fellows melting away under those murderous fir —close up their ranks and slowly retreat. Ah!" sa she, closing her beautiful eyes with a shudder, "that w anguish!"

"But you saw it to the end?" said Theodora, wishi to hear all.

"Oh, dear, yes; till they began to bring over t wounded, and then we had our hands and hearts f enough, I assure you. Ugh! such ugly sights!"

"Were you sorry you went?"

"No, oh, no. When I saw how surprised and plea the poor fellows were to find a woman nursing then was thankful to be there. I shall never forget one p lieutenant—why, child, how your eyes devour me! C they wait for your ears? It's nothing much anyw only I can see, this moment, as plainly as I did at time, that look. The surgeon was dressing a wound the throat of this lieutenant—his assistant was a g brute, and I could see his blundering fingers were turing the young man, so I offered my services inst The lieutenant could hardly speak, but he lifted to face the most eloquent pair of brown eyes I ever saw my life; and when we were done, he kissed my h stained with his own blood, and said with a great ef —'Kind as my sister's hand.'"

Theodora was trembling so, that she could hardly steadily:

"Did he live?"

"Oh, dear, no! It was a dreadful wound—I suppose the spinal cord was injured. He went delirious very soon, and it was pitiful to hear him. One moment he would think he was at home, and such gleams of happiness would dart into his eyes, and then he would look so distressed."

"Did you find out who he was?"

"No; I tried hard, for I knew by the looks of him he was somebody's darling; but there was no clue at all. Some miscreant had stripped his pockets, probably, as he lay on the field, for they were entirely empty, and one of them turned inside out."

"Didn't he call any names in his delirium?" asked Theodora, her throat so dry she could hardly speak.

"Not that I could make out. I could understand 'father' and 'mother' once in a while, but you see this wound in the throat grew inflamed very fast, and his constant effort to talk made it a great deal worse. Then, of course, I could stay by him only a few minutes at a time, there were so many of them. Why, there was a little drummer boy—"

"Excuse me—one moment, please. Won't you describe to me how this lieutenant looked?"

"I do believe I have got you in love with my poor dead lieutenant! He had a beautiful head—not so very large, but made for noble things—I am a bit of a phrenologist, you must know. Then his face—I don't know how I can describe it to you—only it was a refined, high-toned face, pale as death then, of course, but lit up with those wonderful brown eyes."

"And his hair?"

"Oh, yes, he had a mass of hair a shade or two darker than his eyes—a little curly, I think it was."

"You are good to remember."

"An artist's wife learns to notice such thing. In fact, I have dabbled in painting, myself. I should have liked that head for a study. Speaking of his hair reminds me: when he died I thought I might yet find out who he was, and I would cut a lock of his hair for his mother, if I should ever find her."

"Could I any way see it—the lock of hair?"

"I shouldn't wonder if I had it still in the pocket of my portmonnaie, where I put it that night. I haven't thought of it since." She unclasped an inner compartment, and among sundry little souvenirs found a folded scrap torn from the margin of a newspaper.

"I think it is in that; yes. Why, my dear girl, how pale you look! Are you sick, or have I told you too many of my dismal stories?"

"Oh, it's nothing, madam," said Theodora, trying to smile.

The tress of hair was just the color of Donald's—brown, almost black; still it did not seem quite like his. She thought it was not so fine and soft. Still all the description seemed so like him that her heart fainted within her.

If he had been carried from the field that first night, and died among strangers, the chaplain's fruitless search was accounted for.

She told her new acquaintance the little she knew about her brother's history on that fatal field, and they compared notes as carefully as they could. There was nothing which might not be a mere coincidence—still nothing which made it improbable that Donald was the young officer who died holding this stranger's hand, trying to say what she could not possibly understand. Theo-

dora begged the lock of hair that she might compare it with one her mother had.

"Yes; you might as well have it," said Mrs. Arden. "I shall not be likely to meet any of his friends unless it was your brother. How strange that I should have cut that hair for you, and you should have been sent to me here!"

Theodora winced under that; she did not admit to herself that it was Donald; but she said, "If it was not he, it may have been some one just as dear to some home, and just as full of promise."

"Yes, indeed. We are losing hundreds of princely young spirits the future cannot well spare."

"How did the army bear their repulse?"

"Like men; they came back battered and saddened, but unbroken in spirit."

In New York, Theodora lost her interesting companion. She thanked her earnestly for her kind care of the dying, whether her own was among them or not, and promised to write her if they ever learned of Donald's fate.

It was a sadly tender meeting at home. When she told the story of her talk with the lady-nurse, she found her father settled upon it as altogether probable that the dying lieutenant she had described and their lost Donald were one.

Faith added as evidence, "You know, Theodora, he always wanted your hands about him when he had a headache; that little remark about his sister's hand seems like him."

"Yes, but for that very reason that I always soothed his head when anything ailed him, I know the very feeling of his hair, and this does not seem like it, to me. It is not so soft."

The mother brought out from her treasures a little lock, cut from her dear boy's head the night before he went away. She and Theodora thought there was a difference. Mr. Cameron, Faith, and Jessie could not detect any. So they were kept in harrowing uncertainty. A brave and trusting soul can learn to bear almost anything; but when it knows not which of awful calamities has befallen it, it has to bear them all at once.

> "To fear is harder than to weep;
> To watch, than to endure;
> The hardest of all griefs to bear
> Is a grief that is not sure."

If they thought of him as in heaven, and began to comfort themselves with his blessedness, there broke in upon them the possibility that he was at that moment suffering the long-drawn horrors of starvation. If they believed for a moment that he was a prisoner, and might yet be given back to life and to them, there would shut down upon them the likelihood that they should never see him again till the grave should give up its dead.

One day, about a week after Theodora reached home, little Minnie Larabee came running in, panting, with the news: "My papa has got home, and he goes on a crutch, and his arm is in a string, and he wants you to come right straight down, all of you, so he can tell you all about Donald; and so does mamma too."

How much might this mean? In five minutes they were all on their way. They found the Larabee family beaming with happiness, though their soldier had a broken arm in a sling and a bullet-hole below the knee.

After the first warm greetings, when they were all gathered close around him, he said: "It isn't anything

new I can tell about your son, Mr. Cameron" (a hope that had flashed up in their hearts died down); "but I knew you would want to know everything I could tell about Donald up to the last I saw of him. I didn't know how much they had written you."

"You are very kind to think of us so soon."

"There has been hardly an hour that I haven't thought of you," said the color-sergeant, with a sigh. "If I had an own brother, I don't see how I could think any more of him than I do of Donald."

Theodora blessed him for saying "do." He did not dismiss him among the dead.

"Were you near him as late as any one?" asked Mrs. Cameron.

"Yes, ma'am. I will tell you how it was: I suppose you know the captain was severely wounded when we first went in, so that Lieutenant Cameron had command of the company all day. Nobody could have done better. He seemed to put mettle into us all. Along about sundown, our regiment was ordered to charge a battery that had been bothering us badly. Our men started at double-quick, with a cheer; but, you see, the thing had been tried again and again, and the ground before that battery was strewed so thick with the dead and wounded that it staggered them—good soldiers, too, as ever carried a musket. It wasn't so much the enemy's cannon, but going over all that to get at them. It was sort of ghastly, you know. But the lieutenant he sprang forward of us and waved his sword towards the dead, and sung out: 'Do it for *them*, boys!' At that, they gave a yell, and dashed forward with such a sudden fury that we carried the battery. But every one of the color-guard fell around me, and, just as we sprang over the parapet, a

ball struck me just below the shoulder here and broke my arm. It came so suddenly, that I almost dropped the flag; but Lieutenant Cameron saw it—he saw everything—and caught it just in time to save it. He sprang up on one of the big guns, and waved it, and the boys gave a tremendous cheer. Just then the Johnnies came down upon us, like a land-slide, three to our one, and drove us out of the battery about as quick as we had driven them out. I was anxious about the flag, and kept close watch of that. I saw them close round the lieutenant, and I thought, 'They've got it, sure!'"

"Oh, Mr. Larabee! did you care more for that than for him?"

"Why, no, Mrs. Cameron; but, you know, the flag was my charge; and, besides, I thought they were sure to go together—it and he. But they didn't; for, as soon as he saw the rebs all around him—it was all in a minute—he wrapped the colors around the staff, and gave it a fling, right over their heads, in among us, and shouted out: 'Take care of that, boys!' A dozen hands caught at it, and we brought it off safe."

"But my poor boy?" asked the mother, with pale lips.

"That was the last we saw of him," answered the soldier, gently.

"Could nothing be done but just leave him there alone among his enemies?" asked Mr. Cameron.

"What could we do, sir? They were coming down upon us, from higher ground, like a tornado; and then a battery from the left was trained upon us, so as to give us an enfilading fire. It was a perfect hell! The regiment was ordered to fall back; and what else could we do? I am sure, if there was a man on that field that we would have died for—some of us—it was he."

"No—I see you could do nothing for him," said the father, with a groan. "You have been a kind, faithful friend to him, Mr. Larabee; he often spoke of it in his letters, and we shall always be thankful to you."

"Oh, that's nothing! I couldn't help it."

"Tell us your thoughts, Theodora; you look as if you could see the silver lining of the cloud," said Mrs. Larabee.

"I do. I feel sure from Mr. Larabee's story that Donald is alive."

"Wouldn't they kill him if they took him that way?" asked Jessie, who was sitting on a low stool at the soldier's feet, looking earnestly into his face.

"I think not. They wouldn't, unless he defended himself, and it would be madness to do that, in the circumstances."

"Wouldn't they be wrathy because he saved the flag from them?" asked Faith.

"Yes; but they would like him for it too. One soldier respects a gallant act in another soldier, if he is an enemy. It is true they might be so provoked to have him snatch the colors out of their very hands, as it were, as to shoot him on the spot; but it is more likely, in my opinion, that he is a prisoner."

XXV.

AT HOME.

IT was three years since Theodora had been at home before, except on short visits. The last night of 1862, she sat by the study fire after all the rest had gone to bed, planning how she could make her new year worth the most.

Any one who has the good fortune to belong to a large family, knows what a zeal for improvements the children bring home from their absence.

Coming with a fresh breeze from the outer world, it seems easy to them to change things which have been accepted as necessary evils. The first thing this young lady settled in her wisdom was, that Faith ought to go away from home for a while. She had just finished her school-days at the village academy, and had taught a district school, near by, through the Summer.

Faith was a born Radical. She went to the root of things, and if once satisfied that the root was good, she took what grew from it, bitter or sweet. Compromise was not in her vocabulary. Her conscience knew no middle-ground between right and wrong. Her will held her up to the demands of conscience without flinching. She was naturally proud, but rather self-depreciating than conceited. She spoke the truth without fear or favor. Theodora was over-sensitive to the opinions of other people. She loved to please them; to be blamed made her feel as if she was to blame; that might be partly due to

the fact, that in childhood she had almost never been blamed unless she deserved it. Yet Faith, who had had the same training, if she fell under censure, sifted the matter carefully, and if she found no wrong in her own motives or conduct, cared nothing further about it. Her sturdy following of principles to their last extremes, and her brusque truthfulness made her less popular than any of her family. People called her "odd," and "queer," though a few predicted she would "make a splendid woman." Her pungent sayings and peculiar doings were remembered, and reported in the parish, however, longer than the more agreeable and ordinary words and deeds of her brothers and sisters. For instance, it pleased people as much as it shocked them to find out from the man himself, that when she joined the church at fourteen years old, and found herself bound by her vows to watch over her brethren and sisters, she had gone privately to Brother Grimes and dealt with him, Bible in hand, on his sin of covetousness, which, she informed him, was the same thing which folks called stinginess when they talked of him.

Now Theodora thought, as she meditated in the night-watches, that the Scotch granite of this younger sister's character would take a beautiful polish if it could be rubbed down by other people's opinions, wishes, and habits. If she could keep all her strength, and fearless truth while she gained more deference for others, she would make a woman of rare power. It would be the best thing, if she could be with Miriam in the school at Downington for a year or two. She could be spared from home, since she had come; how to raise the money was the chronic difficulty.

She wrote Miriam about it, before she went to sleep,

asking her opinion. Miriam answered promptly, offering to pay half the bills out of her salary if the other half could be provided for. Then she talked it over with the father and mother, and Faith herself. The result was, that Faith insisted on hiring the money on a life insurance security, intending to pay it when she could earn it. Deacon Perley was willing to lend it to her in that way. Her district-school money would help so far as it went, but that was a very little way. Theodora came near losing patience with the child on the wardrobe question. If clothes were whole and clean, and warm, that was enough, according to Faith's severe reasoning. The older sister had an inordinate love of pretty things. The mother, though poor in purse, was rich in skill and taste, and she did not want her child to look meagerly or oddly clad among the rest. Faith had a plain face, and needed some taste in dress to make her pleasing to the eyes. They had some lively discussions over it. Theodora made Faith admit the utility of beauty, and Faith made Theodora ashamed that she was apt to allow fashion too large a share in making up her idea of beauty. By dint of diligence and ingenuity, the mother and older sister

"Gar auld claes look amaist as weel's the new,"

and make one new dress, which harmonizes in itself their respect for the ways of the world with Faith's relentless "sense."

The busy excitement of getting this child ready and sending her off was a wholesome diversion from the ever-present anxiety about the lost brother. When Faith was gone, and things settled into their regular channels again, Theodora felt that her mother must be her next care. She was much worn with work and sorrow. The daughter

seemed to be inspired with an ardent desire to learn housekeeping; after much coaxing, she persuaded her mother to "play lady," and let her take the housekeeping. She never should learn to be independent if she was right around with her all the time! The mother might keep the front part of the house in order, but not come into the kitchen between breakfast and dinner. With only four in the family, it was a capital time to learn! Jessie should help all she could, out of school hours.

It would be impossible to tell which was the hardest—for Theodora to fulfil her part of the contract, or the mother hers. The girl was surprised to find how much more housework tired her than it used to, when she was in the habit of doing it. After being quite out of the way of it for three years, although she was healthy and strong, her muscles had to learn hardness and endurance all over again. When the work was done, her feet ached with weariness more than as if she had walked six or eight miles. Then she was amazed at the multiplicity of cares in housekeeping. She wrote Miriam, one of those days:

"I look with reverence on every woman I meet that is a good housekeeper. It requires more of

> "'The reason firm, the temperate will,
> Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill,'

than it does to be Governor of a State, I am quite sure. I am all the time afraid I shall make some blunder so outrageous that mother will not dare leave me to my own devices any longer. So far, I hold my own pretty well, but there isn't a morning that she doesn't put her head into the kitchen to suggest that it is time to put the meat in the oven, or it is the day to make yeast, or something of the kind."

child. To beguile her from that thought, the d
talked of everything that interested either of them.
was hardly a person she had known, or a place wl
had been during her three years' absence, that she
make as real to her mother as it was to herself.
mother lives as many lives as she has children.
each, she feels afresh the hopes and fears long si
to rest for herself. As the girl told so frankly
experiences of her New York and Virginia l
mother entered into it all, feeling for her whate
had felt, and noting with unspoken thankfuln
while, how the training and principles of ho
followed her, and how her character had gained in
and poise through the discipline of life.

Still every road seemed to lead back to the
Fredricksburg.

Then Theodora would win her mother, someh
talking of her own youth, till, wandering off i
sunny past, she would lose sight of the shadow
present. These recollections were full of inter

who have always been giving us out of their fulness are not beyond feeling the hunger and thirst of the heart for themselves. Then our greedy clamor for succor and boundless forbearance turns to a tender and reverent ministry. We wake to see that we have been drinking in their faithful love and care, as thanklessly as the brown Spring mould absorbs the sunshine and rain; and we yearn to give it back in the fragrant gratitude of our Summer, and the golden fruitage of our Autumn.

Dearly as this child had always loved her mother, she felt as if she had never known her till in those long, confiding talks she had been allowed to go back with her to her girlhood, and see how she had grown to be what she was.

Four o'clock P. M. brought the mail. Every day they charged themselves not to expect anything from Donald, yet every day they were disappointed. Precious letters came from the other children, but not one little word from him.

Robert's letters always brightened the day, and they had come oftener since this trouble had hung over them. He seemed sure that his lost brother could be, would be found, and they all felt more hopeful for a few hours after reading one of his letters. His mother always carried the last in her pocket. For himself, he was full of courage and good cheer. He was proud of his General, proud of his men, proud to be one of the Sons of the West, so resolutely working and fighting to make their Great River again a bond of the Union. As for himself personally, they never would have known whether he was doing well or ill for all he said about it. But the letters his wife occasionally wrote them, after relating the exploits of her baby, were filled with his father's capacity and bravery, and sometimes his promotion.

In the long Winter evenings, they all sat together while the father read aloud. Different as they were from the old times when such a merry circle of boys and girls were laughing and talking with their books and work about the sitting-room table, those evenings were very sweet to Theodora. The home-feeling never comes to its perfection as when the moat and the warder of snow and wind hold off the indifferent world, and every face you can look upon is one of those you love best.

Some work for the Soldier's Aid Society was always in the basket on the table, and whatever time the mother and daughters could spare from the family sewing was given to that. Patriotism attained a triumph when Jessie laid aside the crochetting of a cologne-stand, to learn to knit a coarse army sock.

One of those evenings, when Mr. Cameron was reading the news to them, while they worked, he began a letter from some correspondent near the seat of war, but broke off abruptly, read two or three items of European intelligence, and then left them, to go to his study.

Mrs. Cameron was so busy teaching Jessie how to "set the heel" of her sock—a mystery she had no curiosity to understand—that she did not notice it; but Theodora saw that he looked distressed, and followed him. He was sitting with his head bowed on his arms, folded on the table before him. He raised it as she came near, and his face showed such anguish as she had never seen there before. She thought he must have read something about Donald, but her first longing was to comfort him. Without speaking, she drew his head to her bosom, and laid her cheek on his dear grey hair. He threw his arms around her, and hugged her hard. The tears sprang to her eyes, for

his embraces were rare and full of meaning. Then he pointed to a paragraph, saying:

"Don't let your mother see it."

The newspaper correspondent was describing the return of a company of exchanged prisoners, and he had spared no pains to set forth "The sunken, hollow cheeks—the parchment skin, drawn tightly over the bones—the filthy rags, swarming with vermin—the great, cavernous, lack-luster eyes—the half-idiotic stare—the dreamy condition—the loss of memory, even of their own names—the wonder with which they regarded the most ordinary events."

"We must try to hope he is dead, my child. It would be far better than this. My son! my son!"

His head dropped again upon his arms, and she could only lay hers beside it and weep. Then she thought her mother would miss them—went to her room and bathed her eyes and went downstairs again.

At prayers that night the chapter was—"I was ahungered, sick, and in prison," and the suffering father laid his lost boy once more upon the sympathy of the Son of God, who said, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of my disciples ye did it unto me."

Though the mother's eyes were spared that letter, the newspapers were constantly bringing harrowing accounts of the captured soldiers, and many a time she turned away from the table unable to taste food for the thought that her Donald might, at that moment, be dying of hunger.

It was touching to Mr. Cameron's people to trace in his sermons, that Winter, the progress of his own soul in that victory which overcometh the world. His was one of those natures which can better bear an agony of defi-

nite pain than the slow torture of long suspense. But this was the discipline appointed by the Great Refiner. His faith grappled with the task set before it, and grew in strength till he could leave the son of his love in the hands of the Eternal, not knowing what had befallen him there, and say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

A minister can never gain a spiritual triumph for himself alone. Unconsciously he echoes to his people, struggling through the same "fight of afflictions," the words of his Master, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." So it was that the sad mystery of Donald Cameron's fate became a means of blessing to his native village. It was a time of sorrow and fear to many, and the pastor comforted them with that same comfort wherewith he was comforted of God.

To "little Jessie," as she was still called, though she was now fourteen years old, Theodora's home-coming was a God-send. Just at that period no one could have had so much power over her. Often when a girl reaches that transition line where the child and the woman meet, an older sister is needed to supplement the mother's work. To Mrs. Cameron, weary with the long march, it was a great relief to turn over the care of the last child to this fresh young spirit which took such strong hold upon her.

Perhaps of the four girls, this youngest was most fitted to wear upon a mother's patience. There was nothing peculiar about her, but she was one of those girls who can spend two hours exquisitely arranging a basket of flowers, while the breakfast dishes wait to be washed; enjoy embroidery while there are holes in their elbows; read a story "while the flat-irons are heating," and go on reading it till they are cool again; one of those girls who are

always just "going to" do the needed thing. Strangers who looked in her face of lily and rose, with its liquid eyes and halo of sunny curls, exclaimed: "What a sweet child! What a lovely disposition she must have!" But the family knew very well that pretty face was much more subject to clouds than Faith's homely one, and nobody ever thought of calling Faith amiable. It was only at home that it was known how patient and kind and self-sacrificing she was. Still Jessie was very lovable. She was a devotee to any one she loved—romantic, imaginative—a lover of beauty in every form. To Theodora it belonged to show her the beauty of humble, every-day fidelity. Miriam was fond of her, and sent her valuable presents, but she was more self-contained and reserved, so that Jessie did not feel quite free with her; besides, Miriam always treated her as if she was just a little girl, and she was fourteen years old! Theodora had the tact to keep just abreast with her growth. As for Faith, she was too severe with her faults and follies, and her strictures did not tell upon her much, because Jessie thought she did not appreciate such things as she delighted in. But this older sister seemed to like everything she liked, seemed to understand exactly how she felt, and what she wanted, and managed to get for her a good many little gratifications that no one else seemed to think of any consequence. Meanwhile, by some magical power of persuasion, she won her into the very habits of self-denying duty that her mother and Miriam and Faith were always urging upon her. Since they were the only sisters at home, it was all the easier for Theodora to make her a companion, and taking it for granted that she wished to share her labors and forestall their mother's cares, inspire her with a real zeal about it that should bear down her

dreamy, castle-building listlessness with a current of earnest, useful work. The waking up to practical service at home told upon her success in school. She had plenty of ability, but it was so much easier to sit with her head resting on her hand, gazing out through the swaying branches around the old academy and weave some beautiful reverie, than it was to force her powers to the tug of real study, that she had never excelled. She studied enough to save herself mortification, and rested upon the consciousness that she could do better if she should try. But after toning up her resolution to accomplish all she could, helping Theodora before school, she felt more like real work in study. Besides, she was ambitious to be approved by the sister she admired so much, and her teachers were pleasantly surprised by a new activity of mind that Winter.

One thing about house-work worried Theodora. The longer she did it, the less it tired her, and the better she understood it; so that by the time the Winter was through she felt quite the mistress of the situation, but it was spoiling her hands for her profession. She liked her hands to look pretty, but she would not have minded that if she had not been a pianist. Besides, she found very little time to practice. She was anxious to keep up her music, and more than that; for this stay at home she considered only an episode. Her business was teaching music, just as much as Robert's was farming. He had left his for an emergency, and she, hers; but she expected to go back to it, and wished to go in good condition. She loved her music so much that it was no small sacrifice for her to have time only to play some dear old symphony to rest herself when she was tired; and even in doing that, to feel that her fingers were forgetting their cunning, and

getting brown and clumsy with washing pots and kettles and going in and out of the oven. She said to herself: "I wouldn't mind it for myself, but it's bad as a matter of business." One day, Alice and Susy Fenton came in to beg her to give them music lessons. She thought it over, and decided that if she could find a girl to help in the kitchen and relieve her there, so that she could get more time and keep in better condition for the piano, she would do it. These two scholars would be enough to pay for it. Her mother was pleased with the plan, and "girl-hunting" was begun at once.

There are no "servants" in Vermont, but there are "hired girls." In some of its towns, society has never fallen from that goodly estate which reformers are striving to bring the world back to. A girl who is not needed at home is willing to render service for a consideration in a family where she is needed, even though that family may be no better off and no higher in social standing than her own. Perhaps, one season she teaches a district school, and the next—if she has not the taste or the skill for managing children—she prefers to earn her pocket-money as "help" to some neighbor. She must be treated like one of the family, of course; and so far as intelligence, neatness, and manners are concerned, there is often no reason she should not. The only difficulty about that—except where a good deal of style is to be maintained—is, that few families like the restraint of an outsider always present, and few girls have the discretion to go into the very heart of a household, listening to the freedom of table-talk, and go out again without making mischief.

After much searching, a girl, sixteen years old, was found in one of the families on the outskirts of the parish,

who was strong and willing to "work her fingers to the bone," as she declared, if she could "only learn to play the pianer." Her father had bought her a "serapim," and took great pride in her musical genius, but she knew only what she had picked up. So Bloomy Thrasher came down to the parsonage to spend her strength, mornings, with broom and scrubbing-brush; afternoons, for two hours, in practicing on the "pianer."

She was disposed to put as much muscle into the last occupation as the first. Aside from the service of her strong arms, it was a good thing for the Camerons to hear her hearty laugh and be amused at her shrewd, unsophisticated speeches. When there is a great grief in a house, some one is really needed there who feels it only by sympathy. As for "Bloomy," she enjoyed it with all her might. So many new ideas, so much company, so many books! It never occurred to her that she was not "as good as anybody," because she was the "hired girl." Strong in her self-respect and the friendship of the family, she got all the pleasure that was to be had in her circumstances.

"If you ever keep a house of your own," said Mr Cameron to Theodora, "breaking this colt to harness will have been a good thing for you. It is one thing to know how to do everything yourself, and quite another to teach somebody else and keep her up to the working point. I notice a great many women fret and worry and wear themselves out with work, because they have n't the tact and patience to drill a servant to do things well."

"I am at my wits' end with her sometimes; she bangs around so, and talks so much and so loud. But then, she is so good-natured and bright and tidy, I might be a great deal worse off."

"Indeed you might. Bloomy has the making of a capable, good woman in her, and you are helping her towards it every day. I think you have a happy knack, Theodora, of bringing out the best of people."

The girl dared not trust herself to answer. Though she was not naturally one of the melting sort, she sometimes got so thoroughly tired now with the housekeeping, and the work, and the practicing, and the teaching, and the managing Jessie and Bloomy, and the worrying about Donald, and the trying to keep bright for the sake of her father and mother, that it took only a touch of love or a morsel of praise to bring the tears.

As the months wore away, from Winter to Spring, and Spring to Summer, and all their efforts failed to get any clue to her brother's fate, even her hopefulness began to flag. With every exchange of prisoners, their hopes revived, only to die a more painful death. And now a new difficulty had arisen. The Emancipation Proclamation, promulgated on New Year's Day, had been received with transports of rejoicing and of rage. The enlistment of black regiments had soon followed, and the threat of the Richmond powers to enslave the men and execute the officers of such troops had brought the exchange of prisoners to a dead-lock. The National Government, determined to defend impartially all its defenders, refused to treat of exchange, unless all taken fighting under the Stars and Stripes were recognized as prisoners of war, without regard to color, and allowed an equal chance of release.

This placed the Camerons, like thousands of other families, in a cruel dilemma of feeling. On one side was intense anxiety for their own "in durance vile detained;" on the other, the deep desire to secure justice for

the race just coming to their manhood. The harrassing fear that if release ever came, it might be too late, gnawed their hearts. Theodora could see that her father and mother were fast growing old, and she felt as if she was, too. When her spirits sank, so that she could no longer speak courage to the rest, the woods were her refuge. There she met God and grew strong. It was so long since she had been at home at the same season of the year, that the Spring freshet, the first catkins by the brooks, the trailing arbutus in the forest—all the coming on of life and beauty over the earth, brought back with redoubled freshness the dear old days when they had all been so happy together, and made her long for Donald till it seemed as if her heart would break. One noon-time, in the last of May, when she found she had come to such a pass that she could not bear to lift her eyes to her mother's pale, patient face, she said to herself, "This will never do, child;" put on her hat, and went off to spend the afternoon by the old brook. It was almost four weeks since they had heard from Robert, so that new fear was added to the bitter cup. She remembered his birth-day, when they four went up the brook together. How light-hearted they were then! Yes, and how happy they had been since, and how much life had been worth to them all! That they were sure of, whatever might come in the future. Already they had had enough to make life a blessing, and what if there were dark, dreadful times now, by-and-by it would all be over, and they would all be safe in Heaven together. She threw herself down on a heap of last year's leaves, and slowly the old grove sent its subtle soothing into her heart—the gentle motions of young weeds swaying on their slender stems, their little shadows swaying beneath them; the low but

of the first bee of the season, sailing about in his black velvet and gold, eager to taste the first sip of the violets, yet too dainty to settle on any; the flitting shadow of a bird flying over in silence; the twittering hither and yonder in the tree-tops; the rattling tap of the woodpecker; the harmless little insects that came out in their new livery to sun themselves, promenading on her lap. She lay back on the brown, crisp leaves, with her hands clasped behind her head, and gazed up through the fretwork of half-grown foliage, not yet large enough to hide the beautiful tracery of stems, into the depths of blue.

The love of God flowed in upon her wounded spirit like oil and wine: "He doth not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men." Had not those "of whom the world was not worthy" been "destitute, afflicted, tormented," time out of mind? Was not the great Captain of our salvation "made perfect through suffering"? Could not her Donald, and she for him, bear whatever HE should suffer to come? After all,

> "What is life, that we should moan?
> Why make we such ado?"

As she gazed up into that unfathomable abyss of purity and peace, she could be content to wait for eternal joy. The sorrow and trouble seemed "but for a moment"; the "weight of glory" "far more exceeding and eternal." Only to do and to bear, as seeing Him who is invisible, was enough for now. There was plenty of time for happiness hereafter. The soft Spring breezes, with their woods' fragrance, breathed lovingly upon her; a robin lighted on a bough that rocked beneath his weight, and poured out a heartful of music. Courage and faith

grew strong. Still looking up into the blue, s
could see her Father's face looking down on
whispered to Him all her weariness and fear,
trust, submission, and love. His benediction f
her.

XXVI.

A BREAK IN THE CLOUDS.

THEODORA came home with an elastic step, bright eyes, and fresh color. Her mother's face brightened by reflection. Her father, coming in and seeing them both looking cheerful, felt happier at once. Then Jessie came home, bringing a letter from Robert, safe and well, and jubilant over the taking of Vicksburg. He had been so occupied in marching and fighting, and learning to change his duties from those of Adjutant to Lieutenant-Colonel, that he had failed to write. Letters from Miriam and Faith added to their happiness; for they said, "Only a month now, and we shall be home again!" Miriam wrote: "I think you will be pleased with the change in Faith. In spite of herself, she has added something of suavity to her old strength. She is quite a character in school, I find. The girls admire her for her scholarship and thinking power. There is nothing they respect in each other more than independence; and this child of ours is independent to a fault, you know. I find, whoever wants to do right and does not quite dare to, likes to attach herself to Faith. Of course she gives offence by her blunt speech, and is by no means universally popular. But she is quite as much of an oracle among her school-mates as is good for her. And it is a great blessing to her to find herself loved by so many and to be obliged to regard the peculiarities of those she loves and wants to help."

When they came home, it brought new life into the house. Young hearts cannot remember trouble all the time, and the four sisters had many happy hours together. Sometimes, when they were laughing over some ludicrous scene in the past, one would remind the rest of the bright thing Donald said, or the comical thing he did at the time; and the laugh would end in a sigh. The father and mother could seldom forget; but they had reached the peace of faith and submission, so that they took a meek comfort in what was left to them.

One night, Mr. Joyce's house took fire. The village had no fire-engine or company; but the citizens fought the fire manfully, and saved every live thing about the place, and many valuables, though the buildings had to go. Mr. Cameron's energy and fearless promptitude did great service. He had the clear head and quick eye to see, in an emergency, what could and what could not be done. But, as he was getting a horse out from the burning barn, the creature, frantic with fear, kicked him so that he was laid up for a month with the injury.

It was the second day of this confinement that the telegraph-boy came to the door with one of those ominous yellow envelopes. "Robert is shot!" thought the mother. They all watched the father's expression anxiously while he tore the despatch open and glanced over it. They saw a wonderful change pass over it. He looked up at them with an awe of gladness beaming from his face:

"Safe under the flag. Letter to-morrow. Are you all alive? DONALD CAMERON.

"—— *Hospital, Cincinnati, O., July 20th*, 1863."

They looked at each other in a maze of joy. The girls laughed, and their mother cried. Each had to take the

elegram in her own hands, and read it with her own yes. What letters were hurried off to Cincinnati by the ext mail can be imagined.

Bloomy Thrasher, meanwhile, rushed off to tell the ews to the Perleys, and the Graveses, and the Larabees, nd Alice Fenton, and Merlie Myers, and everybody she ıet on the way. Meanwhile, the good news had spread rom the telegraph-office also; so that by noon the whole illage was rejoicing over it.

The letter which followed was short, and written feebly n pencil. It stated that he, with one comrade, had es- aped from a railroad train as they were being moved rom their prison to another farther South. It burned vith longing to get home and see them all, and asked if is father could come for him, or, at least, meet him at Wheeling, if he could get to his uncle's. A long post- cript was added by some one, who seemed to be a lady isitor to the hospital. She wrote that he was very weak, ut the surgeon thought he would be able to travel before ong. If any of his friends could come to him in the neanwhile, he would gain all the faster, as his eagerness o get home kept him in a feverish state.

Mr. Cameron said he must start at once, and took down is injured foot from its rest, as the first step towards it; ut he found it impossible to use it at all.

"Let me go, father," said Theodora. "I know every tep of the way to Wheeling, and if he is still at Cincin- ati, that is only another day's journey."

"Oh, you couldn't, my child! The country is too un- uiet—the riots only last week. And the cars will still e crowded, I presume, with the wounded and their riends coming away from Gettysburg."

"They would be coming in the opposite direction most-

ly. Do let me go; Mr. Leighton will see me through New York. You never mind danger or hardship for yourself, at all, but you feel it so much for us children I am not a bit afraid. You certainly cannot use your foot for a week or two at the shortest. Besides, if I go I can stay and nurse him till he is well able to come home.'

She finally gained his consent, and the next morning started on her way, full of eager expectation. By evening she was crossing New York, listening with intense interest to Mr. Leighton's account of their adventures in the riot the week before. He saw her safely on the Western train for a night's travel.

XXVII.

A CHANCE MEETING.

PRESENTLY the very stout lady who shared Theodora's "section," summoned the waiter to make up the berths. All was very soon ready, and the two retired behind their curtain. Theodora's ticket was for the lower berth, but the fat lady, after one effort to upheave her vastness, gave a direful groan and looked her pitifully in the face.

"I never can do it," said she.

"I will exchange with you, if you like," said Theodora.

"You may as well, for I shall be the death of ye if I try to go over ye."

This seemed rather probable, and the young lady mounted lightly to her perch, though she hated being shelved, anyway, and had an idea the cream of the bad air rose to the top. Through her sleep all night ran a sense that all was going well; the steady tramp of iron enginery which shook her bed with its tremor was carrying her swiftly on towards the desire of her heart. Now and then came waking glimpses of cities flashing by—dark hills rising against the sky—now the red lights of burning fiery furnaces, and she knows she has reached the coal region, and thinks drowsily of Little Nell and her grandfather warming themselves at night by such a fire. Then sleep floats along on the undercurrent of sound and motion, till a change in them both breaks

through it, and light streams in at her little win
They are in some large station-house. A group of l
and gentlemen come aboard, and she wonders stu
how anybody can laugh and joke so late at night.
voices die away as sleep settles down again. After s
while, she is waked by the ceasing of the rattle and
to find it is dawn, and Harrisburg. The gentlemen
the section opposite are hurrying off. The "Do
cannot find his things. First there is a panic abo
shoes, and his friends picture him promenading the s
in his gorgeous slippers. The black Colossus
under the berth and drags the shoes to light. No
is he at rest about them, than he raises a new alarm
his umbrella. "Was it green cloth, doctor?" ask
of his friends. "Yes!" hopefully. "And hac
wooden handle?" "Yes, yes!" "And a kind o
frame for extending it?" "Why, yes, where is
"I haven't seen it."

The country began to break into bold spurs
mountain range, but a state of disgust tempere
traveler's admiration. She thought she would
travel for pleasure, the other senses have to suf
much for the sake of the eyes. One must be "
with noises loud and ruinous," half suffocated with
ous smells, tired in every muscle, buried alive i
and ashes, in order to carry his eyes around to
feasts. After a good washing and breakfast at Al
however, she began to regard things in a different l

As the train wound in and out among the fores
tled steeps of the Alleghanies, she grew happy, and
it swept royally around the magnificent arena of
Horseshoe Bend," she could hardly contain her del

About noon a telegraphic rumor flew from mo

mouth that the rebel guerrilla Morgan, whose daring raid had kept the borders of the Ohio in terror for two weeks past, was now at Lagrange, directly on their route, fighting Union troops. This was enlivening—to be steaming right towards a battle!

As the train dashed into Steubenville, it was cheered by some hundreds of soldiers, who looked as if they were waiting for something to happen. They contradicted the report of a battle, and said Morgan and his men were feeding their horses four miles back from that place.

Theodora was intensely interested. She could not but admire this bold Robin Hood and his merry men for daring to make such an astounding dash through the heart of the enemy's country, and she felt the shadow of a wish he might escape, partly because it would make a splendid end for his exploit, partly from her natural sympathy with the hunted, rather than the hunters.

Every few miles, bodies of soldiery were stationed. Before nearly every farm-house, a family-group were on the lookout, who waved flags or handkerchiefs to the train. Hardly a yeoman crossed the fields without a musket over his shoulder. The whole population was on the *qui vive*. A steamboat was patrolling the river. At every station was a crowd of people eager to hear and to tell some news.

At length our traveler saw in the distance the cloud of heavy smoke hanging over Wheeling, and began to wonder who would come to meet her. She had been able to announce her coming only a day in advance, and it was always understood that if they failed to be at the station in time, she was to go to a certain hotel in town and await them.

The well-known picture of hills, winding river, and

graceful bridges thrilled her like the remembered prelude of a dear old tune.

As the train slackened its speed, she saw that a large force of militia were guarding the station. The raiders had had so disastrous an experience trying to cross the fords of the river, it was supposed there was nothing they would like so well as to make a dash over this bridge, the only one below Pittsburg.

She saw, at a glance, that all the troops were extempore volunteers. She peered into the crowd as the train stopped, to find her cousins among them, but recognized nobody. As she stood on the car platform, waiting for the brakeman to help down an old lady with a bandbox and a parrot, she looked again, and saw, not Will nor Archie, but, over the heads of the crowd some distance off, a mounted officer in the regular uniform, whose grand shoulders and heavy beard looked familiar. The easy nonchalance with which he sat his restive horse, as he talked with some one standing near him, was unmistakable. The girl's heart gave a little frisk out of its regular beat and said to her, "Pelham Bell!"

But the brakeman is ready for her now, so she goes along with the rest to the omnibus which runs across the bridge to the city.

As she sat in it, waiting, she caught sight again of Pelham Bell's knightly figure. He was shading his eyes with his gauntleted hand, and looking in that direction. She wished he had known she was to be there. At that moment, the omnibus started with a guard on each side of it, and she saw Lieut. Bell galloping off. She could not but think how pleasant it would have been to speak with him once more, at least to have praised him for his gallant exploits. "So near and yet so far!" How com-

manding and handsome he looked in his uniform! Then came an idle wonderment, as she gazed out on the river, what would have come of it if she had consented to correspond with him, and an idle wish that one could do every delightful thing without anything coming of it.

But now they were rattling over the old pavement. The very smell of the smoke which she used to detest, had a flavor of old times in it which made it agreeable. So had the shabby gentility of the begrimed hotel parlor. She would have been dissatisfied if the carpet had looked bright, or the lace curtain clean. She learned from the clerk that no one had yet come to meet her, and sat down by the window to wait.

At length, she heard a footstep change from the oilcloth of the hall to the brussels of the parlor, and turned to see her cousin Archie entering the room. The boy was well pleased by her exclamations of amazement at his height, but changed the subject when she inquired mischievously why he did not let his mustache grow.

"When did you get my letter?" she asked.

"I haven't seen any letter. I have been down guarding the bridge since yesterday morning. So have Will and Hans. Father and mother are out in Ohio, at Uncle Tom's; he is right sick. There's not a man about the place except old Jake, and I reckon the girls have not been to the post-office. No person likes to trust his horses out of sight of home, just now.

"But how did you know I was here? I looked for you among the soldiers, but I didn't see you."

"No more did I you; but Lieut. Bell came to me and said he thought he saw you getting into the omnibus; it was a good piece off, and he didn't suppose you were anywhere in these parts, so he was not certain. I told him

I expected it was you, and I was afraid you'd have no way to get out home. So he went off, and asked leave of absence for me, long enough to take you. I don't expect I could have got to come, if it had not been for him, but he is General Blank's favorite Aide, you know, and he can have favors for the asking."

"Donald hasn't come?"

"No; we have heard nothing except through you."

Archie was gone a long time. At first, Theodora did not mind it. It was pleasant to know that her old friend had recognized her, and taken care of her. It is pleasant to be quickly recognized, after a long absence!

Perhaps from being so busy all her days that she was obliged to make the most of the minutes, Theodora knew how to wait. When she had thought over the Torringtons and Bell, till the new time had joined itself kindly to the old, she took paper and pencil from her traveling bag, and settling herself at the broad window seat, wrote a letter home. As she glanced up, she saw by the slant streams of dusky sunshine that day was almost gone, and wondered what could keep Archie so long. Riding up that rough road in the dark, with a strange horse, was not a thing to be desired. Just as she was filling the last corner of her margin, he came back. She hurried her letter into an envelope and left it to be posted. Archie told her, as they went down to the door, that he had found it nearly impossible to get any horse at all; martial law had been proclaimed, and the stable-keepers were not allowed to let any horse without special permit. After running all over the city, he had succeeded in finding a creature that was quite safe from capture, for obvious reasons, and a carriage to match him. When she saw it she demurred a little.

"Are you sure it will hold together till we get there? That either of them will? There is such

"'A general sense of mild decay,
And something "local," I should say,'

besides. Why, Archie, it is tied together with strings; the buggy is, and I am sure the horse ought to be."

"'Deed it is; that is the reason it will hold together. Jump in, cousin. No fear but it will hang together three or four hours yet."

The ancient beast had been an originally good one:

"E'en in his ashes lived his wonted fires,"

and on discovering that he had a good driver behind him, he trundled them along so well that they reached the Limestone Rocks just as the great round sun sank behind the horizon. It flooded the beautiful valley with red light, and as that ebbed away, the first star of evening glittered out from the clear blue, and the young moon shone through the trees.

It was a strange Sunday and Monday with only the three girls in the large house. They heard cannon Sunday afternoon, but could only conjecture what it meant. The very dogs seemed lonesome. Old Rover sat on the horse-block, Monday afternoon, watching for some one to come, till he grew discouraged, and dropped asleep. Suddenly he waked with a short, loud bark, and then the terriers set up their chorus of higher-keyed barking. Theodora ran to the window and saw the Newfoundland waving his white plume of a tail while the smaller dogs were scampering up the road to meet the clattering of horse's feet. The trees hid the horseman for a moment, but as he dashed up to the gate she gave a cry of pleas-

ure which made him look up and lift his chapeau with a flashing smile. He was hardly off his horse before she was downstairs and on the porch.

"How good you were to come 'way out here to see me!" she said, with a beaming face, as she gave him her hand.

"*Good!* How bad you were not so much as to let me know you were coming!" said Bell, shaking her hand, and still keeping it. "Ah, Miss Dora, if you cared half as much about your old friends as they do about you, you wouldn't treat them that way."

"Indeed, Bell, I didn't know you were anywhere this side of Dixie."

"Then I'll forgive you and tell you the news. Morgan is taken."

"Good! When? Where? Who took him? Walk into the parlor. Girls!" she called at the foot of the stairs, "Morgan is taken. Come down and see Lieutenant Bell."

"Last night. Columbiana County. General Shackleford."

"Do tell me all about it."

"There is nothing much to tell," said the Lieutenant, wheeling around an easy chair for her and throwing himself down on a sofa right opposite. "He had been driven onto a bluff, and was completely bagged, so that there was nothing to do but surrender with his men."

"Poor fellows!"

"*Poor fellows!*" repeated Bell, with a comical expression of the eyebrows. "What a rebel sympathizer you are! You ought to clap your hands and rejoice and sing 'Good enough for them!'"

"Oh, I am glad, only I can't help pitying them, too."

"That was always one of the charming things about you, Miss Dora. In spite of your blue orthodoxy, you would '*poor fellow*' the biggest scoundrel, if you saw him in a tight place."

"You need not say in spite of that, Bell, for there is nothing in my religion that wouldn't make me all the more pitiful to everybody in trouble. But do tell me about yourself! You don't know how proud I have been of your gallant exploits. I always thought you might make something rather extra if you were only forced to it."

This saucy thrust threw them at once into their old tone of raillery and retort; but in the midst of the badinage he told her much about his army life, mocking at his own brave deeds, as he did at everything else. Nothing in life is so sad or so terrible that it has not a motley patch of the ludicrous somewhere upon it, and this never escaped Pelham Bell's quick eye. He described to her grand and fearful scenes, but while she was still thrilling with the grandeur or the dread, he would give it some ridiculous turn that would end it all in laughter.

"But you have kept me prating about myself all this while," he said at last; "now, pray tell me what kind fortune brought you here, just in the nick of time for me to bless myself with the sight of you."

To answer was to tell the story of Donald's capture—the long suspense and the glad news of his safety. That was something she could not joke about, and it comforted her to see the sympathetic interest in the handsome face of her listener. He could understand her trial and pain, just as he would about his own; yet she felt that he could not understand the heavenly strength and comfort that had carried her through it, and she did not try

to tell him about that. Perhaps she wronged him in not giving him that part of the story.

She had often felt to blame, in their old days together, that she never gave him what was most real and precious to her. It seemed as if it would be turning what was most dear and sacred into a jest, for there was not a touch of reverence in his composition, still he had one of the kindest hearts in the world; he confided in her as his best friend, and, perhaps, if she had trusted him with her higher, holier feelings, learning to respect them for her sake, he might have ended by cherishing them for his own.

"Then you go right on to old Cincinnati?" he asked, when she was through.

"Yes, to-morrow."

"What a piece of luck! General Blank sent me to buy him a horse. He is mighty fanciful, and thinks nobody can suit him but me. I fostered the delusion so I might get to come home for a few days. I have fooled around here as long as I care to, so I was intending to go down to Parkersburg to-morrow, where I hear of the horse I want; then go on and join the General at Cairo.

"So, if you will allow me the honor, I can be your escort."

"I could paddle my own canoe if it was necessary, but it is very nice to take in a good strong pilot," she said, nestling back in her easy chair with a contented sigh.

"You never had any difficulty about taking me in," said the aide-de-camp, ambiguously; "if you would only take me in for good—"

"What a precious pilot you would make!" she said, laughing; and he laughed too, half provoked.

It was decided that to go down the Ohio by boat as far

as Parkersburg, and there take the rail, would give an easy, pleasant trip for her, and afford him time for the horse purchase without delay in the journey.

Now "the girls" came down stairs, and "the boys" came home, released from guard duty, and the house began to ring with voices, and seem like itself again.

XXVIII.

DOWN THE RIVER.

IT was in high spirits that Theodora went on board "The Water Sprite." She could say now, "To-morrow I shall see him!" In the meanwhile, she had to enjoy a trip down La Belle Riviere, under a bright Summer sky, with one of the handsomest and most entertaining of companions.

As they sat in the shadiest spot on the deck, waiting for the boat to start, the clatter of hoofs drew their eyes to the suspension-bridge, with its graceful curves and solid towers. A troop of cavalry were crossing it; they turned short to the left, and came down through the trees, on the opposite bank, to water their horses. Some of them cantered gaily into the river, throwing a shower of diamonds into the sunshine. Others walked in demurely, sipping as they went. The foremost rider wore a scarlet blouse.

Theodora turned from the scene, her face alight with admiration, and found her friend at her side, gazing at her with very much the same expression.

"Why don't you look at that charming picture?" she exclaimed in some confusion.

"Because I have a more charming one to look at," he answered, with a smile.

She felt that she was blushing, and that he was pleased to see her blush, and that vexed her, for her unruly blood seemed to attach more consequence to the look and the

remark, than she chose to have it. Parrying his pretty speeches had been one of the pleasant little excitements of her intercourse with him, especially in the latter part of it, when she was conscious that he was more than half in earnest. She had grown adroit at it, but now she was out of practice. Besides, she had felt a new respect and solicitude for him since he had been in danger, and borne himself so well, which made it difficult for her to keep up that light tone of raillery, which could turn the sentimental to the ridiculous in a moment, and yet give no offence.

There was a change on his part as well. He had been so starved for ladies' society, in his two years' service, that any ordinarily pretty girl might have won much gallantry from him. But Theodora Cameron was the woman he believed in. He was not a man to take much note of his own good deeds, but when he had done a specially brave or generous thing, as he sometimes did, he always felt a longing to see her again. Now that he was with her, he thought her more lovable than ever. Unknown to herself, the patient suffering of the last eight months had wrought in her soul, and so in her looks and manner, a sweet, womanly gentleness. Much as he always liked her, he used to think she was too cutting sometimes—too independent.

"She has somehow had a porcelain shade put over her brightness," he said to himself, "and the light is more agreeable."

That slight blush delighted his heart,—it seemed to bring her within his reach; she was not invulnerable; he could make her take his compliments; no matter what her lips said, so long as her cheek would answer like that. Having blushed once, she would be afraid of it, and that would make her blush again.

But now the boat was sweeping around to her course, and the wheels were lashing the tawny river into amber spray. The shady was becoming the sunny side, but before most of the passengers had taken in the change, our young lady found herself seated in one of the most comfortable chairs, where the happiest conditions of shade and breeze and look-out met.

Bell was anxious to hear the whole story of the confiscation, and expressed hot indignation at Mrs. Torrington's treatment of her. Whatever really touched her he seemed to feel warmly; but for the rest, he used a mocking tone which distressed her. Whether he told of a hair-breadth escape from death, or of an old acquaintance morally ruined, he had some droll phrase for it, or some comico-shocking story to tell in connection. If she remonstrated, he would retort that if she had only corresponded with him as she ought to have done, he never should have become a savage and a reprobate; and very likely, before he was through, he would betray a gleam of feeling so real and kind, that she thought he sometimes laughed to keep from tears.

Whenever the boat stopped, they amused themselves with comments on the by-standers. The "Water Sprite" tacked to shore at the beck of anybody who chose to hail her.

"What an American scene!" exclaimed Theodora, as they leaned over the bulwarks, watching the crowd at one of these landings.

The boat was loading and unloading all manner of merchandize, from potatoes to baby-wagons, but the first thing which had been put off was the village supply of newspapers, and everybody not busy about the landing, was reading them. In the background, the village, with

its church, school-house, and grog-shop; a bit of the forest primeval on one side, and a thriving corn-field on the other, sloped to the water's edge.

"Yes, that's American. They are reading the news about your 'poor fellows.' But see there; that's cosmopolitan; see that naval engagement?"

He pointed to a couple of Newfoundland dogs, which had come down to show off their swimming. One of the deck-hands had thrown over an old broom, and they were contending for the honor of bringing it in.

"That's the kind of thing that's going on the world around," said Lieutenant Bell; "two pulling at the same broom-stick, and flattering themselves all the world is interested in the result. That's what the North and South have been at these three years. We have the broom end, and I expect we shall succeed, but it'll not prove we are the best dog. Seek him! That was a good pull! Ah, you have lost it!"

The dog that had the advantage of the broom end came swimming proudly in with his prize.

"You talk," said Theodora, "as if there was nothing at stake. I don't see how you can fight as you do, if you don't value what you are fighting for. I shouldn't want to throw away my life for a broom-stick."

"I don't think it is of any great account which way it turns, really," he answered. "Our Government is as corrupt as it can be; the country is overgrown and bound to fall to pieces some of these days, any way. So long as I am in for it, of course I want my side to beat; as to fighting, put me under fire and I couldn't but do my best if it was all about a shoe-string."

"Oh, Bell, it is such a belittling, depressing view of things! If the Government is corrupt, the citizens can

purify it. The country *is* enormous, but you are fighting that the same principle it was founded upon may grapple it together. I want you to feel you are one of the champions of a Government as strong as it is free, which will bless the nation years after these armies are all dead."

"Perhaps I might, if I could always kindle my enthusiasm at those beautiful eyes."

As he spoke, the eyes in question shone through a sudden dimness which resembled tears—

"As the mist resembles rain."

He saw that he had hurt her by turning her earnest plea to the purpose of a mere compliment to herself, and he loved her for it. Instantly his manner changed, and his tones were sweet and rich, as he said:

"Forgive me, Miss Dora; I would like to see things as you do, but there is so much trickery, and jealousy, and meanness all about me that I lose faith in everything great or good, except—" He checked himself from saying "when I am with you," lest he should offend again, but the silence was significant.

There was a manly humility in the "dark, splendid" face turned towards her, which touched her heart. She longed to have him believe on Him who is the resurrection and the life for every virtue and every holy hope. In a few simple, earnest words she told him so.

He listened with a more serious look than he often wore, and answered, gloomily:

"It must be beautiful to have a faith like yours; but it's not for me. I believe what I can see; but everything beyond this world is an utter blank to me. I shall be surprised if I find myself in any other quarters when I am ousted from these."

There was a moment's silence, and when he looked up he saw that her face was sad and perplexed.

"It is very good of you to care what becomes of me, Miss Dora. I am sure if anybody can be the saving of me, it is you. If I could have you always near me, I shouldn't wonder if I got to be quite a saint in time." The words were light, but the melancholy smile on the mirthful mouth gave them a pathetic sound.

She felt as if she would give her life to redeem him.

"Am I too hopeless a heathen?" he asked.

It was not a very definite question, but the pleading ardor of the look that went with it was definite enough.

How one could love him if she once gave herself up to it! Would it be foolish? Would it be wrong? At any rate, her heart was too heavy with real anxiety about him to answer with a joke this time.

"You are not 'hopeless' any way, Bell. We will be good friends always, and I will help you every way I can if you will only try to find the truth and live by it."

He shook his head slightly, as if dissatisfied, but said nothing more.

"See how the mist is gathering on the hills yonder!" exclaimed Theodora.

"It is rain, and it is coming this way very fast. Will you go in?"

"I want to see it come. It looks as if all the world had faded away, except this circle around us."

"Let me open your state-room door—may I? You can sit just inside, and see it as well."

In a moment, he had her arranged, with his rubber blanket thrown over her.

"No; my water-proof is here, and you must keep the blanket, unless you would rather go in."

At that moment came a blinding flash of light and he answered:

"No, thank you. Thunder and lightning, iron and leaden rail, is all the same to me"—a crash of der drowned his voice.

The rain was pouring now, but they were on the tered side.

"What a lovely little island!"

At that moment the boat ran aground on the little island. Torrents of rain hid both shores river, and made the trees near them appear lil phantom foliage of some enchanted isle. Eve minutes, a sheet of white lightning flashed before with a chain of intenser fire flung over the blaze o light. Quickly after, came a peal of thunder, seemed to roll out from some far-off cave of space, deepen, reverberate, as though the skies would f neath its awful weight, then die away, with solem murs, in the distant heavens.

"Are you afraid?" asked Bell.

"No," was all she answered; but he turned h slowly from her face—it was so radiant with re awe. The sublimity of a great thunder-storm alway her soul. Besides, whether she was distinctly consc it or not, there was a subtile charm in the illusion the world dissolved save this one island, with it veiled beauty—all the people out of sight, out of save this one man, who made her feel that she wa to him than all of them. There was an air of fr and of strength about his grand figure, with his beard blowing in the wind, and his bold, brigh meeting the lightning full in the face, that mad seem like some glorious creature of the storm. H

like her, the exhilaration of tempestuous joy which thrilled through sky and air; but one grand element of her delight was quite unknown to him. To her, the Lord spake out of the whirlwind; it was the God of glory that thundered marvelously with His voice; and the homely love and trust of every day rose to exultant worship.

With one mighty crash, close over their heads, the tremendous commotion ended. Fast as they had come, the armies of the air withdrew. The sun shone out on the reeking earth. The "Water Sprite" had much ado to tear herself away from the island; but, in time she succeeded, and sped on her way.

"How should you like to go up into the pilot-house?" asked Bell, after supper.

"Of all things! Will he let us?"

"Yes. We have a free and hospitable way of doing things on our river. We are not stiff and exclusive, like your Yankees."

The old man at the wheel had a sharp eye and a good-natured mouth. He allowed the young lady to steer, taught her to signal boats they met, and amused her with his sense of superiority to pilots that have plenty of water to navigate.

"Capt'n, did you hear the news we had telegraphed up to the Point?" he asked Bell.

"No; what was it?"

"They've had right smart of a collision, down yonder to Pebble Cove. The 'River Queen' met the 'Georgianna,' and knocked her to the bottom of the river."

"That was unkind," said Bell, coolly. "How did it happen?"

"It was during that thunder-storm. Wasn't that a

master-storm, though! You mind, we couldn't see a boat's length from us. The 'Queen' kept tooting all the way; but, bless me! some of them thunder-claps were that loud you couldn't ha' heard her toot's five yards off. They'd ought t'ave tied up—that's what they'd ought to du; but Cap'n Pushell, he's always in such a might hurry he won't stop, and you can't make him anyhow He never seen the little steamer till she was smac under his bows, and the 'Queen' cut into her."

"Did she sink right away?" asked Theodora.

"In three minutes, ma'am, there was not a stick of h above water, 'cept the upper cabin. The water je h'isted that clean off, and they towed it to shore."

"Were many lost?"

"It was all over that quick that not a soul was sav but the few that happened to be in the upper cabin, a what the 'Queen' could pick out of the water."

"So they never knew what hurt them," said Be "That was lucky. Miss Dora, isn't it getting rath breezy for you up here?"

They went down, and watched the coming on of evenii

A pitch-pine torch, flaring on the dark bank, beckon the "Water Sprite" to call for passengers.

An old man, whose face looked haggard even in t glare of the red torch-light, called out:

"Captain, could you put me off where the cabin of t 'Georgianna' is."

The Captain stood at the other end of the boat wh our travelers could not hear him, but they could see t old man looking up anxiously as he listened to his rep then they heard him say:

"I expect my daughter was on the boat, and I want see if I can find any trace of her."

In a moment, one of the boat hands ran down and helped him up the plank, and the "Sprite" was on her way again. He came slowly up the stairs and went into the cabin.

The two friends still sat on the after-deck, enjoying each other, and the enchanted beauty of the night. The moon crested the wake of the boat, turning the turbid river into a stream of crystal. Theodora felt a sweet relief in being so exquisitely taken care of, instead of taking care of others. She had hardly been conscious, in the time of it, how great an effort she was making to bear her own burdens, and stay up the spirits of her father and mother; but now it was over, it seemed delicious to rest on the light-hearted strength of this lover-friend and feel no anxiety for anybody or anything.

Take care, Theodora! Will he do to rest upon for life? The moonlight is very tender, so are the tones in your ear. Your heart is hovering very near the flame! Will it warm and bless you, or singe your wings and maim your life?

The bell rang, and the boat stopped. The old man came out of the cabin. Theodora followed him with pitying eyes.

"Couldn't you go with him, Bell? He seems feeble; you are so strong and so quick to see everything, I don't believe but you could help him."

"I will see if I can," he said, rising quickly, but not forgetting to draw her shawl more closely around her, with a caressing motion.

She watched them getting into the little boat—the Captain, an oarsman, the father, and Bell. The oars cut the smooth, dark water and threw it up in silver spray; then she heard the keel grate on the sand, and presently

the yellow light of a lantern shone out from the windows of the wrecked cabin. It seemed a long time that they were gone, and she walked the deck. A little girl ran out from the cabin and danced beside her, singing in the glee of her heart:

"I'm going to Marietty!"

Theodora took her by the hand, smiling back into her happy face, but the mother came to the door and called:

"Annie! Come in, this minute, or I will put you right off the boat." The little thing reluctantly let go her new friend's hand and went in. "You mustn't go pestering strangers that way," the mother was saying as she slammed the door after her.

"What a lesson in politeness! How can mothers be so to their children!" though Theodora.

She went in and took the little maid up beside her and told her a story. By the time she was through, the "Water Sprite" had began to splash again. She was anxious to hear about the old father's quest, and since Bell had not come in, went outside again where he had left her. He was not on the upper deck, but as she leaned over the guards, she heard him talking with the Captain just beneath her. She heard the Captain say:

"You had better tell her and see what she thinks," and Bell replied:

"Indeed, Captain, I never can tell her; you must do it."

Their voices were half hushed, as if it was something dreadful. In the next sentence, she caught only the words "Brother," and "Cincinnati." Her pulses stood still. Could it be—! No; perhaps it had nothing to do with her. Again, she heard Bell's voice saying:

"Indeed, Captain, I would rather be shot than tell her."

She leaned over the guards, and said in a clear, low voice:

"Lieutenant Bell, will you come to me a moment, please?"

A sudden silence seized the group below her; Bell answered:

"Certainly, Miss Dora;" but he seemed slow to come. When he did appear, he smiled and spoke rapidly:

"The old man could find no sign of his daughter. Everything that floated has been stowed in the cabin to be identified; he hopes she was not on board after all."

"I hope so—poor old man!"

"Tell me, Bell," she said, taking him by both hands and looking straight in his eyes, "who is it that you would rather be shot than tell—something?"

His eyes tried to meet hers, but wavered and turned aside. It was she, then!

"Oh, tell me, Bell, tell me truly, just what it is!"

"Perhaps it is nothing at all. This is all that made us fear there was something wrong;" he took out of his breast pocket a card photograph and showed it to her. It was herself. Her heart knocked heavily against its walls.

"It is the very picture I had taken for him, the week he went away," she said; every drop of color left her face. "What else did you find? If you want to show me pity, Bell, tell me everything; I can bear anything; just tell me the very truth, I beg of you."

She was trembling, and he placed her gently in a chair as he answered:

"Upon my honor, I will tell you just everything I know about it; it is little enough. There were a great variety of things that had been in the cabin or been

washed ashore; most of them women's garments. I noticed a soldier's knapsack in the heap, and looking into it, I found such things as one usually carries in a knapsack, and in the corner of it, this picture, in an envelope. That is every sign I saw that your brother might have been aboard."

"I ought to see the other things in the knapsack; I might recognize something."

"The Captain has it, and you shall look."

"I did not understand that the little steamer came from Cincinnati; did it?"

"So they tell me."

"And was going as far as Wheeling?"

"Yes," he answered, as if he hated to add that link to the chain of probabilities.

She dropped her face into her hands, and Bell went to call the Captain, who came and brought the knapsack with him. There was but little in it—nothing which might not belong to one soldier as well as another.

"Poor boy!" said the sister, with a sigh. "He had plenty of little comforts to store in his knapsack when he went away, but he would not have much left after his life in the Prison."

She consulted the Captain whether it would not be better for her to stop at the next town, and wait to see what else should be recovered from the wreck.

He was a rough, weather-beaten man; but she felt he had a kind, fatherly heart when he first came up and folded his large warm hand over hers, without speaking.

"I should say, Miss, you had better just go right on to Cincinnati, and learn for certain whether he started. I allow it's just possible there's some mistake." She

silently blessed the shaggy mouth that said that. "You needn't to fear but what everything will be done to recover the bodies; there's too many folks lost friends, and they will stand a better chance of finding them after two or three days, you know." Her heart writhed away from the idea, but she compelled it to keep still and listen. "You go down to Cincinnati and make inquiries, and if you find your brother was on the 'Georgianna,' you just come back to me; the Lieutenant, here, tells me you will be all alone. My home is in Marietta; anybody will tell you where Captain Franks lives. You come right to me; my wife 'll be a mother to you; she's up to all that kind of thing. We 'll hunt all over, and if there's news to be had about your brother any place, we 'll have it."

"How good you are!" she said, looking up to him with eyes that began to glisten with tears. "But how do I know that he was not among the number rescued by the 'River Queen'! How stupid! Why didn't I think of that at first?" Hope flashed up and shone through her face. She saw the two men exchange glances, but neither spoke, and she asked, timidly, "Why mightn't that be so?"

"I'm right sorry to tell you so; but they gave us a list of those saved on the 'River Queen' up yonder at the Point. Your friend, here, has looked it over, and he don't find your brother's name."

She began to put the things back in the knapsack, took it on her arm, and said, quietly: "I think I will go to my state-room now."

"I'll tell the stewardess to fetch you a cup of tea," said the Captain. Some kind hearts, in default of anything else to do for a person in trouble, always think of giving them something to eat or drink.

"No, thank you, Captain," she answered, with a faint smile. "I couldn't take it."

Bell gave her his arm and walked silently to her door with her. He held her hand a moment at parting. Was there nothing he could do for her? She shook her head, with a pale smile, and said, "Good-night." The moment the door was closed, she threw herself on her knees, and, with bursting tears, poured out her troubled soul into that mighty Heart of Love which had been her refuge and strength hitherto.

Had the blessed hope come so near, only to mock them with a bitterer loss! How could she take home—instead of Donald—this horrible news! Her father and mother must know nothing about it till the last ray of hope was put out. But if Miriam were only there to help her bear it! Or Robert—oh, if Robert were only there! But no; she must bear what was to be borne, and do what was to be done—alone. Yet not alone! Oh, not alone!

The Elder Brother was with her; neither life nor death, nor things present, nor things to come could separate her from Him. She sank low, with her face hidden in her folded arms, sobbing—"Have pity on me, my God!" Sweetly the old words stole into her anguish, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." She knew her father's pity would enfold her like a helpless baby if he could see her distress, and she felt that she and all her trouble were taken up in the arms of Eternal Love and held close in the All-Father's bosom. The tumult of her grief began to subside. "As one whom his mother comforteth," did He comfort her. She turned the leaves of her Bible, to find what words He had for her; they were these: "Fear not;—thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be

with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." With that promise, she could bear anything!

When the little child runs to his mother in a tempest of crying, she takes him in her arms and kisses his hurt, and sweetly soothes him till he masters his grief; but even after he has begun to smile, looking up into her face, a swelling sob will heave his little breast, and when he has dropped asleep in peace, the tears still hang on his lashes.

XXIX.

IS HE THERE?

SOME mornings the sun finds a heavy cloud lowering to swallow up his light, after one joyous glance at the earth.

Theodora's waking was like that. Her first sensation was the same light-hearted hope that had possessed her through the yesterday, but the next moment came darkening down upon her the awful discovery of the evening. She opened her eyes, and they fell on that fatal photograph. She remembered it all. With the memory, came back the strong words: "Fear not;—thou art mine." They gave her no assurance that the calamity had not befallen her, but they made her strong to endure.

The boat was laying at the wharf at Parkersburg. By the time she was ready, the stewardess brought her breakfast, with the word:

"The General said for you to take a cup of coffee and a bit of chicken, and he'll be back right soon."

"The General?—oh, Lieutenant Bell. He has gone ashore?"

"Yes, Miss; he went just a bit ago—just about sun-up; I seen him takin' up the road as if he was in a hurry, like. Do tell me, now! I allowed he must be a General!"

The woman stood, with her arms akimbo, watching the young lady, as she drank her coffee. "If there

a'n't chicken enough to do ye, I reckon I can get some more. I have saw a man this morning that was on the 'River Queen' when they had that collision. He says the water was that full of folks' faces going down, hollerin' for help, it makes him sick to think on it. I'm afeared that corn-cake is kind o' sad, a'n't it? 'Pears like you can't make out your breakfast."

"Plenty, thank you; you may take it away."

Bell secured the horse for his General, made arrangements for its delivery, and was back in time to cross the river, and take the morning train for Cincinnati with her.

It was a trying day for them both. Unless he could find some way of ministering to her physical comfort, Bell seemed, all at once, dropped out of her life. She had been so charming the day before, and they had enjoyed so much together! He wished if her brother was drowned, she had not found it out till she reached Cincinnati.

As for Theodora, she knew how he felt, though he tried to subdue his mood to hers. For his sake, she made the most of the possibility, so pitifully meager, that her loss was not real after all. Catching at that, he would throw the weight off his buoyant spirits, and indulge in his usual jovial strain till the far-away look in her eyes would suddenly sober him, and make him say to himself, "She must think I am a brute." It was a relief to them both when he went into the smoking-car.

When he was gone, she wondered at herself. Only last evening, as they sat in the moonlight, and he had made his half-fiery, half-laughing assaults on her heart, though she gaily repelled them, she had begun to consider surrender. He was such an open-hearted, affection-

ate fellow, a wife could do almost anything with him. What a free, joyous air there was about him. How proud she should feel to see him in any crowd, and know he was hers! The sudden shock of sorrow had wakened her to see how wide apart they really were. To him, "everything outside this world was an utter blank." For her, the very anchor of her soul was fixed in realities outside this world. They could laugh and chat together. She could delight in his grace and sparkle; but in the still home-hours, when the inmost self comes out of her sanctuary to seek response, would she find it? In the motives which must mould a home, she knew they were utterly unlike. Was her faith so vigorous that it could take ice in its bosom and not be chilled? Not for religion's sake only, but for love's sake, could she bear a life-long lack of sympathy in what she held most vital? Then, as for Bell himself—was she full of the Spirit of Christ that she dared stake his soul's welfare on her daily life—seen in the searching light of married intimacy?

When he came back to her, and through the day, he felt that some barrier impalpable, but impassable, had fallen between them.

She was gentle, frank, confiding as ever, but all the witchery that tempted and defied his lover-like advances was gone. She seemed to have lifted their relations over onto the ground of simple friendship. The patient sweetness which put her trouble in the background that it might not oppress him, went to his heart. He felt a new reverence for her along with his chagrin in seeing her remove from his reach so easily. When they came in sight of the city smoke, and she looked up to him, saying: "I am so glad you are with me, Bell!" he felt as if they were the sweetest words he ever heard. It

was something to be her protector at such a time. Three minutes after the cars stopped, he had her in a hack on her way to the hospital. As they rattled over the pavements, Bell noticed that her eyes were bright and her cheeks flushed. Suddenly the carriage drew up before a great brick-building, with the United States flag flying over it. The driver sprang from his box, and flung open the carriage-door, with "Here we are, sir!"

Theodora glanced eagerly up at the many-windowed front, as if she could tell by the outside whether her brother was within or not. Bell lifted her out.

In the large green yard were many fine forest trees. Under these, and on the balcony, many soldiers and officers were lounging, some of them smoking or reading.

Lieut. Bell observed that one of these lifted his eyes from his newspaper, looked fixedly at Theodora, dropped his paper, and walked slowly down the path to meet them. Could that be her brother? No. She was looking at him without any recognition. When he met them, the officer gave Bell the military salute, then lifting his cap, said to Theodora:

"Excuse me; is this Miss Cameron?"

"Yes, my brother—"

"Is better to-day."

The color which ebbed from her cheeks and lips with the question, flowed back at the answer. She glanced up at Lieut. Bell, who met her eyes with answering gladness.

"Is he well enough to see me at once?" she asked of the stranger, who had turned to join them.

"Yes; he is not well enough to wait. We will give him a moment to expect you, however. Flynn," speaking to an attendant they met on the steps, "go tell Lieut. Cameron I am bringing him company."

As he turned from the man to speak to her again, she noticed a scar on his right cheek. His hair was shingled as closely as a Zouave's, and his clean-shaven face, though it showed a refined strength in its feature, was sallow and emaciated.

"Now," he said, "if you will come up our long stairs, leisurely, Flynn will be there long enough before you!"

"Perhaps I had better leave you now," said Lieut. Bell, as they crossed the threshold. "Shall I have your trunk taken to the Burnet House, and call around for you by-and-by."

"Call around first, please, and in the meanwhile I can see what is to be done.

"But you are obliged to go on to-night, are you not?" she asked regretfully. "I mustn't trouble you any more."

"I don't know about the 'obliged,'" he said, carelessly. "I shall stay if I can be of any service to you."

"Oh, you must not stay for me. But come in before you go, to say good-bye, and see my brother a moment."

As she went with her guide up the long stairways and along the corridors, she was charging herself not to seem shocked, however changed Donald might look; not to excite him.

On the third flat, they turned into a large ward, with beds on each side. The room was high and airy, and everything looked neat, but in nearly every bed was some sufferer. She glanced quickly over them, but did not see Donald.

"In the farthest corner," whispered the officer.

She followed the direction of his eyes. Against the white pillows of the farthest bed, she saw a ghastly face. The whole anatomy of it could be seen under the tightly-

yellow skin. Nothing reminded her of Donald
two eyes that shone out like stars, and drew her
s him. Her heart gave a silent cry as if it were
l.
forgot all about the 'excitement'; she darted for-
nd threw her arms around him, sobbing and trem-
and stroking his sunken cheek with her pitying

ıustn't use you all up, the first thing," she said at
th one more kiss, raising herself, and wiping the
om her eyes and then from his. "We must save
r strength to go home with."
ıddenly occurred to her that the roomful of men
her had been spectators of their meeting, but
ɔw she did not care. She did not know how home-
made the poor fellows.
ɔw is mother, and father, and the girls?" asked
l, in a voice which sounded sweetly natural, and yet
than his. "Has anything happened to Robert?
e everything! I am starving to hear."
ɜs, I will. We shall have such nice long talks. I
very good, and not ask you any questions until
ɔw strong."
made her sit on the bedside, close beside him,
his wasted hands could hold hers, plump and warm,
d play languidly with something about her dress
ɜs feasted on her face, while she talked in a low,
oice, telling him a hundred dear, homely trifles.
ıat has become of your beautiful hair and beard?"
ed, laying her hand on his head.
, we were such filthy wretches, when we came in,
e only too glad to get shaved and clipped as clean-
e could. I should have been glad to take off my

skin if I could. You would not have owned me if you had seen me then. *Vile!*" He ended with a grimace of disgust.

"Yes, I would if you had looked like a Hottentot. Never mind. You shall be sweet and clean enough the rest of your life to make up for it."

That look showed with what loathing he thought of his imprisonment, and she resolved not to remind him of it.

"Don't you think we can start for home in a day or two?" he asked, anxiously.

"I don't know yet how much you can bear. Will they let me stay here with you till you go?"

"I asked the head nurse about that, but he was pretty wary. He didn't know what kind of a girl you were, though. You will get the right side of him, and he won't interfere with you. You talk with the surgeon when he comes, won't you? It will be as he says."

"Yes, indeed. I'll coax him, and cajole him, and make him consent."

"You will have to go away at six o'clock every evening, anyhow; but Vince thinks he can find a boarding-place for you near by."

"Who is Vince?"

"Vince? He is my companion in tribulation, my comrade in escape, my best fellow in the world."

She noticed that he was getting tired, and sat still, holding his poor, thin hand in hers.

Presently the officer who had shown her up, came from the other end of the ward, and said:

"It is time to take your medicine, Don."

"Come here, Vince—come and be introduced to my sister. Theodora, this is Colonel Rolfe."

"What! Not your Antietam colonel?" she exclaimed, in pleased surprise, as she gave him her hand.

"The very same. Isn't it odd!"

"And is *he* your 'companion in tribulation,' and so forth?"

"He and no other."

"And you are the young lady, I believe, whose line and bandages stanched this ugly hole," said Rolfe, touching the scar in his cheek, which, as it happened, did not disfigure him, although it was evident enough.

He gave Donald a few drops of medicine, and as he laid down the spoon, said:

"Mrs. Brown can accommodate your sister, if the place suits her."

"You have been over to see?" asked Donald.

"Yes."

"You were very kind to attend to it," said Theodora.

"Just like him," observed her brother.

"It is only around the corner."

She had no doubt the place would suit her well enough, since it was so near, if the price was not extravagant. Donald must not be troubled with the idea that she could not afford whatever was needed for his comfort. So she said at once that she would go there at any rate for the night.

"Don't go, Vince," said Donald, as he turned to leave them. "We don't mind you."

"Do stay," said Theodora, seeing that her brother really wished it, though, for herself, she would much rather have had him away. She found, as Donald drew him into their talk, however, that he seemed to know nearly as much about their home-life as they did.

In a few minutes, Lieutenant Bell's card was brought for Miss Cameron.

"You have to go again so soon!" exclaimed Donald, with a frown.

"Only for a few minutes, to say good-bye."

"Let him come here. That will be better than for you to go down all those stairs. Send Flynn for him, can't you, Vince?"

Colonel Rolfe looked to Theodora for her consent, and she said:

"I should like that, if it won't tire Donald."

Flynn was dispatched; but the moment after, she said:

"I will just go and meet him." And drawing her hand out of her brother's, went out into the corridor.

"He must be a very particular friend," thought Rolfe. But she only wished to warn him against any allusion to her alarm on the river.

"This Pelham Bell is an old Virginia friend of my sister's," said Donald. "I have some curiosity to see him; and I declare," he added, as she entered the lower end of the ward with him, "he is something to see!"

The aide-de-camp's remarkably tall figure and handsome face drew all eyes as he passed up the room. His uniform was showy, his sword-hilt elegant, his sash of the richest dye. As Donald told his sister afterwards, he lighted up the room like a Christmas-tree.

It was with a sharp pang that Theodora noted the contrast, as he bent over to take her brother's hand. He so strong, so full of lusty life, and her Donald so wan and ghastly.

Bell evidently felt it himself. As he sat down by the bedside, he seemed constrained and silent, for him. This would not do, and to get conversation afloat, she told him the incident of her brother's first acquaintance with Rolfe, whom she had just introduced.

"But Colonel Rolfe had met you before to-day?" To her.

"No. How in the world did you recognize me?" she asked, turning to him.

"From your photograph—along with the fact that you were expected," answered Rolfe.

"Did you know her without being told?" asked Donald, looking pleased.

"The moment I was out of the carriage he came to meet me as if I was an old friend."

"Good! I didn't suppose the old photograph was good enough for that. Let us look at it again with the original. They are in the pocket of my Bible, Vince. Please hand it to me." He began to open the fold of the book, but his white fingers trembled, and his sister took it from him. It was the Bible their father had given him just as he went away. Its gilded edges were worn and crumpled, and the book smelt of gunpowder and tobacco-smoke and what not.

"That is the only thing I had in prison with me that hasn't gone into the fire," said Donald.

She drew out the familiar pictures—father, mother, Robert, Miriam, Faith, and Jessie—all but her own. She showed him that the pocket was empty.

"Where can it be?" He turned the leaves to look for it. "I haven't so many possessions as to lose them very easily. I haven't looked at the pictures since I have been expecting you."

"Have you had them out since Walton was here?" asked Rolfe.

"Ben Walton must have carried that off," said Donald, looking up as if a sudden thought had struck him. "Don't you know how he teased me for it? He said I

could get another easily enough. The scamp! He must have taken it."

Theodora felt Bell's eyes trying to catch hers, but would not look at him. She asked as coolly as she could, "When was he here?"

"One day, lately; when was it, Vince?"

"Monday evening."

"His time was up, and he was to start for home the next day. He had no business to steal that photograph."

"Never mind; you shall have a better one."

"No other will be like that; those pictures and that book, and that young man, there, were all the comforts I had for seven months."

"And who is this thief?" asked Bell. "We will arrest him if he is anywhere this side of Hades."

"Oh, he is one of my sister's old admirers," answered Donald. "I suppose I ought to be willing to let him have it—poor soul!"

Theodora hardly heard the banter which Bell opened upon her. If poor Ben Walton went down on board the "Georgianna," must she be the bird of ill-omen to carry the sad news to his family? He still cared enough for her, then, to wish for her picture! Her heart smote her for all the pain she had unwillingly given him.

The surgeon came, and Bell rose to leave.

"I must bid you good-bye, then, with a heartful of thanks," said Theodora.

"No; I'll not go to-morrow."

She looked surprised, for she knew he was under orders to return as soon as the business which he had in hand was done.

"Oh, there are horses that can be looked at in Cin-

cinnati stables," he said, smiling, and stroking his beard. "I might suit the General still better, perhaps."

He saw she did not like it, but he was determined to stay. City was more agreeable than camp; he had found old friends at his hotel. More than all, he was unwilling to leave her an hour sooner than he was compelled. Before they reached the hospital, he had felt that her life was too serious, too earnest for him. She could be his good angel, not his lady-love. But now that everything was bright again, and his desire for her favor was piqued by the thought of that devoted "old admirer" and the swarms of young officers here, where she was likely to spend some weeks, he was not disposed to go away.

"How like him!" thought Theodora, as he went out with an "Au revoir!" "'Pleasure first and duty afterward!'"

As he went out, the evening edition of the *Gazette* was brought in, and Theodora was relieved by discovering in the list of passengers of the "Georgianna" rescued by the "River Queen," the name of B. F. Walton.

The surgeon was easily persuaded to promise that his sister should be Donald's day-nurse while she stayed, but the six o'clock signal soon sent her away for that night. Her brother's eyes followed her longingly; but as she turned at the door of the ward for a good-bye glance, his eyelids were already closed, and his face had such a death-like look that she shuddered at the thought of what might happen over night. As she stood at the window of the doctor's office waiting to speak with him, she felt as if there were an empty place where her heart ought to be.

There was no disease upon him, the surgeon said; it was simply the effect of hardships and walking such distances when he was only fit to be in bed. He might

rally; he hoped he would; but, of course, it was uncertain. The Colonel had gained every hour since they came in; remarkable constitution.

Could he be taken home?

"Let me see—where does he belong?" asked the surgeon, selecting a cigar from the stand on his mantel.

"In Vermont."

He shook his head. "Couldn't stand it for a month or two yet, at any rate. If he should pick up, he might, perhaps, in that time."

He stood with his cigar between his first and second fingers, civilly impatient, she thought, for her to be gone, so that he could light it. An old man was waiting to consult him. As the doctor bowed her out, and was closing the door, she heard him saying, "I hope your son has made up his mind to have that leg amputated." So she had left an aching heart behind her.

Colonel Rolfe was waiting to show her to her boarding-place. She walked beside him without speaking, till they stood on the door-step waiting for some one to answer the bell. Then she looked up to him appealingly, and asked:

"What do *you* think? You have been with him all the while; can he—he can get well?"

"I think so," he said, gravely, yet hopefully. "I do not believe he has borne up so bravely all this time to succumb now he has come safely to land."

The door opened, revealing a boarding-house smell of the most composite character, and a good-natured German damsel showed them in. Rolfe took leave as soon as he had delivered his charge to the talkative landlady, and Theodora was thankful to get to her own room and lock the door on everybody.

To be free to throw herself down on the bed, and cry hard, was a relief she sorely needed. "Oh, my darling! my poor, poor darling!" she sobbed, clutching the pillow, and pressing her face into it. The vision of those hollow temples and cheeks—the dark, heavy rings around his eyes—the beating pulse in his neck—that strange, yellow, leather-like skin—made her shiver. "Oh, my beautiful Donald! How could they—oh, how could they! Poor, dear, brave, patient darling! Oh, God! have pity! Remember poor father and mother! Oh, God! do not let him die!" She cried till her eye-balls burned and her throat ached; but she felt better for it. Mrs. Brown sent for her to come down to tea. She thought she could not; then she remembered that a nurse must keep strong and well; so she washed and brushed, and went down to eat what she could, while her hostess dilated on the tragical scenes she had witnessed in the hospital.

Her trunk came presently, by Bell's order, and he called in the evening; but she excused herself. She wrote a long letter home, telling as cheerful a story as she could without lying.

As soon as she was allowed next morning, she was by Donald's bed-side, and felt reässured. The nurse said he looked better than he had ever seen him before.

As she became used to his sadly-altered looks, and could compare him every day with his worst estate, instead of that bright being they had lost, she grew more hopeful. She could see that he grew a little stronger—that the unnatural color was changing, and the shadows in his face growing less dark. She kept cheerful and bright, with him; but the tears would often come into her eyes, in spite of herself, when she fed him.

She took great pleasure in preparing delicious meals for him. Beside all that the hospital afforded, the Cincinnati ladies were lavish in their kind offers, so that she could easily get whatever he liked. It was pitiful to see how ravenous he was. She persuaded his friend Rolfe to let her cater for him too, and the three had merry times over the little tray beside Donald's bed, as she served up one delicacy after another to her hungry heroes. Another pleasant time in the day was just before she went away at night. Her brother had asked her to sing him one old song, the first day, and after that all the men in the ward begged for it; so that she fell into the habit of singing for them every afternoon. Many of them looked forward to that time as the one pleasure of their weary day.

She felt annoyed about Bell. On one pretext and another, he lingered, all the while losing ground where he hoped to gain it. Beautiful flowers, graceful gallantries, and witty speeches could not make her forget that he had no right to be there. His division were on their rugged march to Chattanooga, and he ought to be with them. He called often at the hospital, where she spent the day. One day, when he dropped in to see her, just after dinner, his brandied breath brought down upon him such an eloquent temperance lecture, that he said to himself, "There would be no getting along with her Puritanical notions!" Yet he called again, as usual, just in time to hear her sing and walk around to her boarding-place with her. The patients in the ward called him "Miss Cameron's beau"; but he was not at all satisfied with his position. When he visited her in the evening, he invariably found more or less of the Misses Brown in the parlor, nothing loth to share the call of so

handsome an officer. He suspected Theodora of connivance in this arrangement, though she never would confess. He saw she was making friends every day, and he did not like it. He upbraided her with caring more for new friends than old ones; not so much because he believed it, as because he liked to see her resent it. It vexed him that he could never get a chance to see her ten minutes alone.

Positively the last day came. The aide-de-camp appeared, with an elegant turn-out, to take Miss Cameron driving. The day was delightful. He would be off for the wars to-morrow, and he wanted to show her some of the fine places about the city.

It looked tempting to the tired girl, and only one thing stood in the way: There was an undefinable but unmistakable something in his face and manner that made her morally certain that if she went on that drive she should be obliged to promise or refuse to marry him—no woman, with a woman's instinct, could have helped knowing it. There was no longer the least question in her mind what her answer should be, if she were forced to give one. She could not trust Pelham Bell enough to allow herself to love him. But she was his true friend. She did not want to give him the pain and chagrin of a rejected lover. She believed his light nature would throw off the passion, and his good sense would help him to accept things as they were, if he was once away from her. Then they could keep the old friendship, unembittered by the remembrance of that question asked and answered.

All this was thought during the moment that she stood in the broad door of the hospital, looking at his gay span, soldiers passing in and out, while he asked her to go. His eager eyes were reading her face.

"It is very kind of you, Bell, and it looks charming; but I shall have to deny myself. Donald misses me every moment I am away, I find."

"But it won't do for you to shut yourself up so. I am sure he would like you to go. Let me ask him —" starting with the word.

"No, Bell," laying her hand on his arm; "he would say 'Yes,' of course, though he did want me; but I am quite sure it isn't best." She spoke decidedly, but without lifting her eyes to his face.

He was always quick to catch her motive, and he divined it now. He felt thwarted and vexed, and said, rather spitefully, as he turned to go:

"I hope you will have a delightful morning with your brother and Colonel Rolfe."

"Oh, Bell!" Her tone was so reproachful that he could not help looking at her; and, seeing the flush on her cheek and the hurt expression of her truthful lips, he relented.

"I suppose I am cross, Miss Dora; but, maybe, you will be sorry when you hear that a bullet has gone through my faithful heart."

There was such an odd mixture of joke and earnest in this upbraiding, that she laughed, and answered:

"Or, more likely, when I hear you have been made Major-General for your eminent services."

"You wouldn't much care which happened to me," he said, sullenly, putting his thumbs in his pockets, and walking slowly down the steps.

"You know better, Bell; you know I care from my heart," she said, walking beside him down the path; "you have not a better friend in the world."

"Not much good your friendship does me, if you will

not let me write to you, nor stay with you, nor even take you to drive."

"Your friendship does me good, Bell, even so. It is a comfort to me to know you believe in me, and you care what becomes of me, though I neither see nor hear from you."

The sweet sincerity of her tone was irresistible. He looked down at her, and met a warm, faithful heart looking out of her blue eyes, offering him a loyal, life-long friendship instead of the love he coveted. Better that than nothing!

A pang of deep, strong feeling crossed his face, as his hope gave up the ghost. He took her hand, and said:

"You are an angel, Dora!"

"God bless you, Bell," she responded warmly.

He kissed her hand—to the edification of the wooden-looking sentry who was pacing before the gate, then suddenly dropped it with a manful "Good-bye," and sprang into the carriage.

The prancing span bounded away, the moment he took up the reins; and he did not turn his head. She stood sending silent blessings after him, till he disappeared down the street.

XXX.

AN ACQUAINTANCE MADE.

LIFE creeping back into Donald Cameron's exhausted frame, seemed to chafe along its old channels as if fretting at the abuse they had suffered. Whatever of strength, and help, and calm can be supplied by one person to another, his sister ministered to him. She was in vigorous health; she read his wants with the quick instinct of love; her patient devotion knew no limit; but after all, she could not lift the burden of languor and distress any more than she could pour her blood into his veins.

After the first exhilaration of her coming had died away, and he knew it was impossible to go home for the present, he sank back into a meek, helpless endurance so utterly unlike the buoyant fortitude natural to him, that it made her heart ache.

News from home, or from the war, would enliven him for a little, and then he would sink back into a listless torpor. Sometimes his friend Rolfe succeeded in rousing him to some interest by living over again the excitement of that night when they slipped between the sleepy guards, and dropped from the platform of the slowly-moving train—that delicious whiff of freedom, as they ran between the rustling rows of broom-corn, while the cars rumbled on with their wretched freight—the queer scenes in negro cabins, where any favors done fugitive slaves

n the underground railroad were gladly repaid—the air-breadth escapes, and finally the sight of the old ag.

"I thought my heart would burst when I saw that," aid Donald; and his sister rejoiced to see a little color eal into his cheeks at the recollection. "And you, old ellow, there were tears in your eyes for once."

Those clear, steady, grey eyes did not look as if they new what tears were.

Theodora had not that disagreeable disposition which hets its own griefs on the good fortune of others, yet he could not help feeling the contrast painfully, as he saw this fellow-prisoner of her brother's moving about ith a firmer step, and a healthier face every day.

At last there came back just strength enough to make he weakness intolerably irksome. That brought an rritability as unnatural to him as the languor. The first lay of that sort was a hard one for his loving nurse. Nothing she could do suited him. No position she could elp him to was right. She tried everything she could hink of to make him comfortable, and at last, in the niddle of the afternoon, he fell into a dose. She went, s she often did, to minister to some other sufferer near hem. It was not five minutes before he called her back.

"I wish you would send one of the nurses here if you nust needs go off," he said sharply.

It was the first unkind thing he had ever said to her, nd it hurt cruelly. Even when they were children, hough he often hectored her, after the fashion of young rothers, he was never cross.

"I thought you were asleep, dear," she said gently; nd taking her place by the head of his bed, she began to brush his hair, which was growing again, as

thick and wavy as ever. He could not see, as she stood, that her soft lips were pressed together, to keep them from trembling. He had no idea how her tired back and feet were aching from being all day on the alert, to wait upon him, nor how pained she felt that her half-worshipped Donald could be impatient and unreasonable towards her. Still less could she imagine in her sound, healthy body, the thousand stings his exasperated nerves were sticking into his patience. Her magnetic touch soothed him, however, and she busied herself about him, in some way, till the signal came for all outsiders to leave. Then she kissed him good-night, more tenderly than ever.

Col. Rolfe was lying on the grass under a tree as she went out. He sprang up and came to walk with her. He had never done it before, since that first night when he showed her the way. She wished he would not now. She did not feel like talking.

As they turned on to the side-walk, they met a small child running away, yelling disgracefully, while the mortified mother was chasing him at a fast walk, evidently distracted between the shame of running to capture him by force, and the fear of his getting away from her altogether. Rolfe stooped and opened his arms so that the little fugitive ran right into them. The urchin stopped crying in sheer amazement, as he found himself lifted to the officer's shoulder. The mother came up flushed and panting, pouring out thanks to the Colonel and reproofs to the child in her native German. Theodora understood her face much better than her words, but Col. Rolfe answered her pleasantly in her own language, and was about to hand over the runaway, but the little fellow was too well-pleased with his lofty perch to give it up. He could not talk, but he clung stoutly

around the Colonel's neck, and shook his flaxen head with all his might.

His mother's upbraiding was received with the utmost composure. Colonel Rolfe asked the woman some question, which she answered; then, turning to Theodora with a smile, he said:

"They live only a square down the street, and I have a mind to give the little scamp a ride, if you don't object."

"Oh, I think it is fun," answered Theodora, laughing, as she looked up at the contented face of the rosy little Teuton.

"She says his father is a soldier, and he misses him."

"Poor little soul! How pleased she seemed to have you answer her in her own language."

"It is pleasant to me to use it. It brings back happy days."

"In Germany?"

"Yes. I was there studying when the war broke out."

"Studying what?"

"Engineering."

"Had you chosen that for your profession?"

"Perhaps it would be truer to say that it had chosen me. I never felt that there was any question about it. If I was made for anything, I knew it was that."

"But it seems to me you are a person who might have a great deal of power over other men. Wouldn't you rather have to do with people than with things?"

"The world's work will be best done if every one chooses what he can best do; don't you think so? If I have a special gift of any kind, it is for dealing with things, not people," answered Rolfe.

As he said it, he was tickling the plump, bare feet that

rested in his hand, till he made the youngster nestle about in convulsions of laughter.

"He has the better of you, after all," said Theodora. "He has pushed your cap into the most rowdyish position you can imagine."

The Colonel set his cap straight, at the same time firing off German threats at the little fellow, which he merrily laughed to scorn.

"I want to know a bit more about your history, if I may," said Theodora. "You said you were in Germany when the war broke out; when did you come home?"

"By the next steamer after hearing that Sumter was fired upon."

"That was just what I wanted to know," she said, looking up at him brightly. That satisfied her idea of patriotism. "You were like Milton, who 'thought it base to be traveling for amusement abroad, while his fellow-citizens were fighting for liberty at home.'"

"To compare small things with great."

The frau, who had gone on before them, stood waiting on her doorstep, with half a dozen round-faced children enviously watching their brother. It seemed unrighteous that he should have such a triumphant return from his wicked escapade.

The Colonel set him down among them, patting his curly pate; and making some good-natured answer to the mother's vociferous thanks, walked away with his companion.

The little scene had cheered her wonderfully. These small mortals that laugh in the face of trouble make it seem unreal.

"I enlisted the very day I reached home," said Rolfe, picking up the conversation where they had dropped it,

and I have seen some rough service; but all the rest put together was nothing to the imprisonment. You don't know, Miss Cameron, what a comfort your brother was to us in those dreary days. Between his fun and his faith, he kept us all up. He had a faculty for finding out what every man could do. No one made such head against the dead-alive *ennui* that stupefied us. He was always starting something to entertain us—games, debates, and the like. You know what a natural orator he is. The boys would rouse themselves to hear him talk when they didn't care for anything else. It was to him they all went for sympathy or advice. There wasn't a poor dog hit upon a new device in his whittling, or concocted a scheme for escape, or fell into any new misery, but that he would go to Don with it. And then," he added, with a moment's hesitation, "he knew how to inspire men with faith in God like nobody else I ever saw. That pocket-Bible of his has been a strength and consolation to many beside himself."

Theodora's heart was full. This was her sweet, strong, bright Donald of old. She could not command her voice, and had to let her face speak for her.

Her companion saw how it was, and went on, in a voice of deep feeling:

"What he was to *me*, God only knows. I should have grown bitter and altogether hateful if I 'd not had him to teach me the Spirit of Christ. It was so much harder for him than for me, too. He had such a home to miss him."

"And you?"

"I am a vagabond, with nobody in particular to tie to," he answered, with a smile.

They had reached Mrs. Brown's door, and Colonel Rolfe declined to come in.

Theodora stood at the window, slowly pulling off her gloves, and watching his manly figure as he walked away. She did not suppose he had any idea that he had comforted her; she did not suspect that he had seen that she stood in need of comfort.

She had a misgiving of it the next morning, however, when she went to the hospital. She had been washing her brother's face and hands, and just as she finished wiping them, he kept her hands in his, and said, with his large, lustrous eyes raised humbly to her face:

"Vince says I was cross yesterday."

"He shouldn't have said any such thing."

"Oh, yes, he should. I believe it is true. I was so tormented, I hardly knew what I said; but I do mean to behave," he said, with a boyish smile, raising her hands to his lips, and kissing them. "It would be a cruel shame to be cross to *you*."

"You needn't mind me, dear, only get well!" Then, to divert his thoughts, she went on: "Your 'Vince' says he is a 'vagabond.'"

"What did he mean?"

"'Nobody to tie to,' he said. Hasn't he a home?"

"No; his father died when he was small, and his mother when he was seventeen or eighteen years old. She is the highest saint in his calendar. His father left him quite a fortune, and he seems to have plenty of friends; but that isn't like having a home like ours."

"No, indeed. Now for your breakfast! There comes your Pythias, with a posy of English violets in his hand."

"Good-morning, Miss Cameron," he said, cheerily, as he reached them. "Shall I give these to you or Don?"

"Him, by all means. Where did you find them, so early in the morning?"

"Little girl, down here at the corner. By the way, Miss Cameron, I am not going to draw upon your commissariat any longer. I am growing so stout I have no excuse for being babied any more."

"But I like to serve you. I always thought 'seeing the animals fed' was an attractive part of the managerie."

"I shall not amuse you that way any more, for I am quite able to forage for myself now."

As he spoke, he smiled and stroked his face, which was really filling out its natural outline, and losing its sallow hue.

"Let me give you one more meal together, anyway."

So they began the day with a pleasant chat over the breakfast, sweetened by the perfume of the violets.

Vincent Rolfe had that simple gentlemanliness which is equally agreeable to men and women. He was a natural soldier. The battle-fire, which cost Cameron the exhausting conflict of a nature up in arms against itself, was to him only an exaltation of quickened faculties. His courage liked danger as a swimmer likes the wave.

"The New England character" sometimes gets a fine development in the North-west. You find the old traits with a fresh grip upon first principles, and a new flexibility in applying them. Let pansies grow in the same bed from year to year, and they run down to mere ladies'-delights. Transplant them often enough, and they keep their original size and richness. The Puritan character never showed its full vigor and beauty till it blossomed in the wilderness. If it declines from its type in the old garden, reset it in the virgin-soil of the prairie. Rolfe was a Western Puritan. The proud integrity which was his by inheritance, might have made him a hard man if the

fiery trials of his captivity had not melted his heart into union with that mighty Sufferer who blends the sternest truth with the lowliest love.

With Rolfe, mind, nerve, and muscle seemed perfectly *en rapport* with each other; as a consequence, the quiet, unconscious dignity of the character gave an easy manliness to all his movements. Whatever he did, there was no uncertainty, no flurry, and no flourish about it. He was not a great talker; but what he said, along with his looks and bearing, drew to him at once a certain respect and confidence.

Theodora was learning to like his manners more and more. At first, it must be confessed, they piqued her. Lieutenant Bell, while he had enough sense of the ludicrous to save him from being "soft," was full of those little attentions that ladies love. His whole manner towards her was a flattery, pointed by indifference to those about her. Col. Rolfe was always kind, never flattering.

She felt the difference most when Bell had lately left her. She was glad he was gone, and yet she missed him and his homage. She liked Col. Rolfe, because Donald loved him; but, for herself, she felt a little afraid of him, he seemed so unsparingly just.

Thinking it over after she went to her own room, one night, she came to this conclusion: "Theodora Cameron, you are a goose! It is sheer vanity that likes to be treated Bell's way better than Col. Rolfe's. Do you want to be put up in a shrine and have incense burned to you, and your very faults petted and complimented? I wouldn't be such a fool, if I were you!"

Still, she thought of Rolfe as Donald's friend—not hers—until that walk and talk, when he cheered her with

a sympathy all the more delicate and welcome because it did not call itself sympathy. After that, they found themselves on a new footing of confidence and friendliness. Rolfe often thought—"What a pity such a noble-hearted girl should throw herself away upon that aide-de-camp!" For he and Bell felt an antipathy for each other at first sight.

As Summer cooled into Autumn, Donald began to improve much faster, and his sister grew very happy. His face, though still extremely pale and thin, had lost that dreadful look which starvation had left upon it. The old light was kindling in his eyes; sometimes the bright smile of other days thrilled her with a sudden joy. His white teeth stood a line apart, and that gave a frank, boyish look to his mouth when it flashed out a smile.

It was a joyful day for the three when, supported by his friend on one side and his sister on the other, the Lieutenant achieved the exploit of walking down into the yard. After that, they used to spend hours, every pleasant day, sitting in their favorite corner of the balcony, talking and enjoying the delicious weather. Often Rolfe read aloud, while Theodora was busy with some sewing for the patients.

In the long months of their captivity, the two young men had exchanged ideas upon all manner of subjects; but the addition of the young woman, with her enthusiasms, opinions, and fancies, seemed to give a new zest to their discussions. Besides, the two, while perfectly appreciative of each other, were so different in mental cast that there was boundless scope for conversation between them.

Rolfe had an unmitigated contempt for all "bosh," a suspicion of romance, and a reverence for science.

Cameron cherished a poetic faith in the heroic past and the golden future.

In loyalty to truth and to God, the two were not unlike.

"What a convenience it would be if a man could know just what is to happen to him!" exclaimed Rolfe, flinging down, as twilight came on, a crumpled copy of a sensation novel, which he had been glancing over. "Here is this fellow, who was lately mooning around under his lady's window, like an idiot; the moment he is cast away in a life-boat, bringing out statistics about shipwrecks, like a lawyer who has just got up his case, he no sooner sets his feet on a desert island, than he shows himself as well-up in the fauna and flora of that particular spot of the earth as if he had been cramming for an examination."

"No doubt would have been equally well posted whether he had landed on Greenland's icy mountains, or India's coral strand," observed Cameron.

"Of course. It's not safe to leave anything unknown because you never can foresee just what you may need."

"Now if you had only been a Cyclopædia incarnate, what a treasure you might have been to me, down there in prison! I might have been 'improving my mind and preparing myself for high and extensive usefulness,'" said Donald, with a lazy smile, at the same time teasing his sister with a wisp of peacock feathers he had for keeping off the flies.

"Stop that, you naughty boy!" she said, moving a little farther off. "You will make me stab Jack, with this great needle."

Jack, the drummer-boy, had fallen into the habit of coming to Miss Cameron with most of his wants, and just

now was standing before her, to have the buttons sewed on his dark flannel shirt-sleeves.

"I must say for you, Don, you were as good as a volume of poems. I never shall hear—

> " 'Stone-walls do not a prison make,
> Nor iron bars a cage—' "

"They do, though!"

"— without hearing the sound of your steps pacing up and down under those grated windows. It is a convenience to carry your favorite authors in your head,—saves room in your knapsack. I'd like that faculty of yours."

Theodora glanced up with a responsive smile; she delighted in her brother's recitations of poetry.

"I have no more faculty than you," he answered. "You remember what you like; some abominable sentence from what you call an ultimate authority, to knock me down with, when you can't refute my arguments yourself."

"That *is* useful. I do remember facts, and scraps that please me, but never a whole speech or poem, like you do."

"My memory is a stratified formation," remarked Donald; "cut down through, and the deposits will show you the stages of my mental history."

Here Jack broke in, "Good for you!" as Theodora fastened her thread, after not only sewing on his buttons, but mending a rip in his sleeve.

All three pairs of eyes had been watching her intently, as men will watch a pair of adroit womanly hands, sewing, and the two young men burst out laughing as Jack buttoned his sleeves complacently, with the remark:

"I'd no idea young ladies were so nice!"

The smile slowly subsided on Rolfe's lips, and seemed to settle in his eyes, as they followed Theodora putting away her thimble in a dainty little housewife, patting the head of Jack's dog as he rose, and stretched himself, then taking the feather-wand from the tired hand of the invalid. He turned his face toward a strip of sunset visible between brick walls, and the smile in his eyes grew dreamy and soft, as he said:

"Speaking of remembered scraps, do you know this from Ruskin: 'Wherever a true wife comes, this home is always round her. The stars only may be over her head; the glow-worm in the night-cold grass may be the only fire at her foot; but home is yet wherever she is; and for a noble woman it stretches far around her, better than ceiled with cedar, or painted with vermilion; shedding its quiet light afar for those who else were homeless'?"

He repeated it in a subdued, mellow tone, which Theodora had never heard in his voice before. The beautiful passage was new to her, so that when he finished, her eyes were fixed on his face, full of a lovely enthusiasm. As he turned his own, with the last words, from the sunset, they too were large and soft with some sweet feeling. Perhaps it was caught from the radiance of the evening clouds, or from the poetic cadences he had been reciting:—Whatever it was, Theodora felt that they opened into some shrine of the man's soul of which she had never before had a glimpse. For the moment that those eyes looked into each other, there breathed through both hearts some fleeting dream of possible blessedness, vague and transient as the passing perfume of unseen flowers.

"Did I hear aright?" asked Donald, a mischievous

smile flickering over his face. "Was that you, Col. Rolfe?"

"It was, Lieutenant," his face instantly coming back to its ordinary expression.

"All right. I was afraid it might be I, and I knew you would call me sentimental."

"It is high time for you to retire," retorted his friend. "This evening air is bad for your health."

The more Col. Rolfe became acquainted with Theodora Cameron, the more he thought it a pity for her to be engaged to "that aide," as he took it for granted she was. Not that it was any concern of his, but as he put it, he did not like to see pearls cast before swine.

Pelham Bell was far from being "a swine," and it was strange that Vincent Rolfe, who was thought remarkable for fairness, should judge him so harshly. He was apt to think it over after she was gone at evening.

"He'll not make her happy," he would say to himself. "He cares enough for her now; it was easy to see that; but he is not a man to be relied upon. She is true as steel, and she will love with all her heart. She ought to have a man she can trust through and through."

One morning the three were sitting in their favorite corner of the balcony, and while the girl helped the two soldiers from a dainty basket of grapes, they were talking about the lady who had just brought them.

"She is perfectly charming to me," Theodora was saying, as she broke off a luscious little cluster and passed it over to the Colonel. "Sometimes when I like a person so very much at first, I feel as if I would rather not go any farther in the acquaintance. There are such unbounded possibilities so long as you don't know. When I first went to Virginia, my window looked out into a

grove, and there were such charming glimpses into the greenery, I longed to go and get lost in it. If I never had gone, I might have imagined it stretching away, a wilderness of delights. But I had not walked in it ten minutes when I came out on a tame orchard."

"Do you remember that birth-day of Robert's, when we went up to the head of the spring?" asked Donald.

"I never shall forget it," answered Theodora, shaking her head, solemnly, while she smoothed out a grape-leaf. "That was the first great disenchantment of my life."

"You speak as if you had looked through life, and found it a fraud," said Col. Rolfe, slowly stroking his mustache, and looking at her fresh, happy face with his grey eyes full of amusement.

"No; I believe in life and in people, only if any one is *particularly* prepossessing, I am afraid it will turn out like the Virginia grove or our old brook."

"I never knew before the compensation for being not prepossessing; if I were that, I should retire from this presence immediately," said Rolfe. He watched her fingers as she broke off a few of the largest grapes for Donald, and re-arranged the clusters that were left. Suddenly he said, "Speaking of Virginia, where is your friend, Lieutenant Bell, now, if I may ask?"

"I suppose he must be at Chattanooga. I've not heard from him since he was here. There, gentlemen, you are not to have another grape till after dinner."

Her answer was easy and natural, as if he had asked the time of day. He silently remarked to himself, "You are a fool; she knows how to take care of herself."

Miss Fletcher, the young lady of whom they had been talking, came out from the hospital, and begged to speak with Col. Rolfe, a moment.

Theodora looked at her with admiring eyes as she walked slowly down the path beside him. Every movement was grace. Her dress was elegant as herself. There was something exquisitely winning in her manner; her lovely face expressed such deference, while she had the self-poised repose of an accomplished woman accustomed to the world—

> "'So absolute she seems
> And in herself complete; so well to know
> Her own,'"—

murmured the girl, with a dreary sense of her own crudeness. "Col. Rolfe seems quite fascinated by Miss Fletcher, don't you think so?" she said to her brother. The lady was seated in her carriage now, and the Colonel's face was certainly full of pleasure as he stood listening to her words.

"Nothing serious, I presume. His heart is cased in ribs of steel. He compares every young lady with that angelic mother of his. I have often told him he never would find a wife to suit him unless one was specially provided, made of celestial clay."

At that moment Miss Fletcher's coachman drew his reins, and with a graceful bow to the two on the balcony, as well as the Colonel, she drove off, followed by the grateful eyes of a score of soldiers scattered under the trees.

"She has the faculty of giving a favor as if she was asking it," said Rolfe, as he came back to the brother and sister. "She wished to know if you were able to ride, Don, and proposes to send around her carriage for us three this afternoon."

Nearly every day after that, Miss Fletcher's carriage was placed at the service of the "Cameron party," as she called them, and not infrequently she joined them in the drive.

XXXI.

BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

BY the last of October, it was thought safe for Lieutenant Cameron to start for home. His friend Rolfe was to leave a few days later and resume command of his regiment, now transferred to the Army of the Cumberland.

Theodora's last day in the hospital was a sober and a busy one. Her heart had ached and her hands had worked for hundreds of brave sufferers beside her brother. She was turning away from sights of agony which had harrowed her heart, yet it was hard to go. It had been something to endure her part of the nation's anguish and toil. Her intense loyalty, her homage for brave self-sacrifice had counted it a sacred privilege to do the lowliest service for the crippled heroes of Corinth or Vicksburg.

A crowd of battered veterans gathered in the yard to say "God bless ye!" to the brother and sister.

Theodora leaned from the carriage window to bow a response to their parting cheer, then retired behind her handkerchief with a sob.

"It is well we left as soon as we did," remarked Donald to Rolfe. "My sister was getting such a stack of bone rings, whittled puzzles, buttons, and keepsake bullets, we should have needed another trunk by next week."

"I don't care!" she said, wiping her eyes and trying

to laugh down her tears. "Every one of them is just as valuable as a relic of the Crusades."

Col. Rolfe had often teased her for her hero-worship.

"Remember they are not demi-gods," he said. "These poor fellows really consist of the same stuff as they did when they were digging ditches or laying bricks."

"That is the beauty of it," she answered. "When we thought we were living in such a hum-drum, matter-of-fact age, to find all at once that there is just as much heroism and grand self-devotion in the world as ever there was. Why, there are dapper little clerks that I have traded with a hundred times, and never dreamed they had a thought beyond their yard-sticks and neck-ties, who have turned out to be knights without reproach or fear. I feel honored that they should ever have deigned to sell me needles and pins!"

"In a few years, your knights will be clerks and farmers and engine-drivers and mechanics again, and all this glamour will be gone, even from your eyes."

"Never! — because it is not glamour. It is just the truth; and I hope I never shall forget that these every-day men are really patriots and heroes as noble as any of old."

"That is to say, it takes nothing out of the common run of humanity to make a good citizen and a good soldier. Don't you think you women, not being fighters yourselves, magnify war-courage out of proportion to the homely, staple virtues of peace?"

"Perhaps; I will pay more respect to the staple peace virtues, if you please; but I won't yield one particle of my admiration for these brave boys."

Rolfe smiled indulgently, and thought what a thoroughbred *woman* she was. It is not unpleasant to be one of the "demi-gods" with such a devout votary.

It was a hard parting for the two comrades. The year they had shared had knit them more closely together than a life-time of ordinary intercourse could have done.

"Perhaps I will be with you yet, before the war is over," said Donald, with wan lips that mocked the words.

"Do it, and we will see that you have a brigadiership. Good-bye, Miss Theodora. Good-bye, my boy. Take care of yourself."

One hard hand-clasp, and the friends were parted for—who could guess how long! The Colonel's face was pale, and his hand, for once, unsteady. He pulled his cap down over his brows, and slung himself from the car-steps, as the train began to move, with a heavier heart than he had carried since leaving Richmond. Donald's eyes filled as he saw him standing in the crowd. Suddenly, he caught sight of them through the window, and a beautiful smile broke out of the gloom. He raised his cap and waved it to them, and that was their last glimpse of him.

The trying journey was safely accomplished. What it was for that father and mother to have their long-lost boy where they could see him every morning and bless him every evening, may perhaps be guessed; it cannot be described. Jessie followed him about, or sat at his feet, looking up at him like a faithful hound, ready to spring, at a look, to do his bidding. It was something beautiful to see the happiness beam out of his transparent face, to see him fondle the oldest things in the house, to hear his comical and loving praises of the homeliest comforts that belonged to the home. His books were like so many old friends, the dearer for the long separation.

Alice Fenton used to come for an hour, every morning, to read to him, beginning Wallenstein just where they

left off. Almost every day, Merlie Myers would run in to amuse him with her sprightly version of the village gossip. He was eager to see everybody, as every one was to see him. It seemed as if the people could not pet him enough to satisfy themselves. The kind housewives were evidently resolved that whatever lack of eatables he had suffered in his imprisonment should be made up to him now.

Miriam and Faith were at home at Thanksgiving, and never were thanks more heartily given. Robert was represented at the dinner-table by a letter announcing his promotion to the position of Brigadier-General.

Snow came early that year, and, all through December and January, the fine weather lasted; the ideal New England Winter—glittering, bracing, shining, white—just cold enough to keep the snow solid and the ice thick. Hannibal was beginning to feel the weight of years, but he seemed to know that his young master had come back, and went cheerily over the glistening roads to take him on all the drives he used to like when he was a boy.

With all their happiness, the father and mother were troubled that Donald did not gain faster. He seemed to live up to his income of strength—laying by very little. It seemed as if the native resilience of his constitution was broken. In February came a great thaw. The earth was covered with deep slush, the air was full of vapor. He took cold, and no remedy made any impression upon it. He languished for lack of out-door exercise.

The river broke up early in March, and strewed blocks of ice all over the meadows. Everything was damp and chill.

Mrs. Cameron, who had seen brothers and sisters go down with consumption, became intensely anxious. The

father and sisters were confident that just as soon as the pleasant Spring weather came on he would be better. She felt that her son was doomed.

"What makes you look so distressed, mother?" the girls would ask, almost impatient at her fears. "He will begin to gain again, as soon as he gets over this cold."

Then she would try to put on a cheerful face, and to confide her forebodings to the "God of consolation" only. Too well her sore heart knew every footstep of the stealthy destroyer.

As the delicious Summer came on, the stubborn cough gave way somewhat; but the lassitude and depression of the hospital days came back.

Any woman who has tried it, knows what a hopeless task it is to find entertainment for a man who is too well to be in bed, too ill to be at work. The sister-nurse did her utmost to amuse her patient. She ransacked her memory for every good story she knew. Never had she coveted rare conversational gifts as she did in the morning drives or the quiet afternoons with him. If she rallied her spirits for a joke, it fell flat. If she asked his opinion on some subject, for the sake of rousing his interest, the question sounded forced in her own ears, and he was apt to give some brief answer, that made it seem foolish. The poor child wondered, in a dim, pitiful way, how people ever could have called her bright. Help from without failed her. Merlie tried him, "with her chatter." He was too restless to follow Alice's reading. He did not like either of them about when he felt dull and nervous. He grew sensitive about seeing anybody; people were apt to look at him as if he was worse, even if they had too much sense to say it. "The doctor did not know anything," he said. When he had been in

good spirits himself, he had been jovial and amusing; now that he needed to be diverted, he always appeared sober. His mother's sad eyes worried him, though she did her best to be courageous, and smiled, while her heart was near breaking. For a while, he rested on his father's strength; but, as the Summer months went on, and the dreaded symptoms, one after another, forced themselves upon that father's notice, he went down into the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Once and again he had given up his son, and received him back as from the very grave. Now that, for a third time, he bowed his soul to the struggle, he had an awful conviction that there could be no reprieve.

The sister's young courage still held out. She would not allow, even to herself, the terrible possibility. Her greatest earthly help in those days were Col. Rolfe's letters. Donald never tired of those. He liked to hear them over and over. They were full of interesting matter, and besides, their tone of manly hope stayed up his spirit. Writing had become too great a weariness to him, so that Theodora now wrote all his letters. After saying all he wished, and making out the most hopeful and sprightly epistle she could to read to him, she always added a postscript, to let his friend know exactly how he was. In return, Rolfe wrote every week a long letter for Donald, made up of army news, stories of camp-life, reminiscences of their old experiences, cheering words, and brotherly love. Then he put a slip for the sister, full of tender concern for Donald, and the kindest sympathy for her. Often these notes were like cold water to a thirsty soul, reviving her fortitude and hope when they were ready to faint. Whatever of sentiment there was in Vincent Rolfe, was more apt to escape in writing than in

talking. It was through those letters she learned that his heart was just as tender as it was true.

It was an indescribable relief, when Summer vacation brought the other sisters home. Their unjaded courage sustained the rest, while they stayed.

The very day they left, Donald took one of those colds that come from, nobody knows where, and grew decidedly worse. His loving nurse was more dismayed than she would confess, even to her mother. She had pleaded with passionate earnestness for his life. She had armed her heart with all the promises. She had pored over the stories of Christ healing the sick, and had tried to go to Him just as sufferers did in those days, beseeching Him to lay His blessed touch upon her dear one also. She never doubted that He could if He would. She believed that He would. If her prayers were not offered in faith and submission, she was sure those of her father and mother were. Still, as the days went by, the precious life was surely ebbing. Did God mind nothing about their petitions? Were His invitations to pray nothing but a mockery?

One day, she had been begging, with strong crying and tears, for the life of her dear one. She had cited promise after promise, till it seemed to her God was bound to grant her request. Then she turned to her Bible; in the regular course of her morning reading, she came upon that touching passage where Moses frankly tells the multitudes of Israel how he besought the Lord, that he might "go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain and Lebanon;" and how the Lord refused him outright, saying: "Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto Me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward and north-

ward and southward and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes; for thou shalt not go over this Jordan. But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see."

He was to accept the stern will of the Eternal with no more ado. In the same moment that He denied him the dearest wish of his heart, God charged him with a duty the most self-forgetting that a man could be called to perform; to prepare his successor for the honor and the joy which he must resign. How much higher things He expects of His children than they dare to expect of themselves!

Then she remembered how Paul besought the Lord thrice, that the messenger of Satan, which had come to buffet him, might depart, and was only answered: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

If the most urgent pleas of Moses and of Paul were not granted, why should she expect that hers would be?

From faith that God would give the precise thing that she asked, she rose to the far higher faith of believing that He would do, for the soul resting upon Him, whatever was wisest and kindest. How did she know whether life or death would be the best blessing for her beloved? Oh, but for her, for herself, she could not doubt his life would be blessing; his death would be bane! Not even that, poor, agonized heart, dost thou know! He who hath loved thee with an everlasting love, He knoweth the bitter cure for thy soul. It may be needful that thy darling should fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ to redeem thee from sin. At length, she

behaved and quieted herself like a weaned child, which lies patiently sobbing on the dear breast which denies it.

She felt no reässurance of her brother's life. Instead of that, she laid bare her heart to the fact that he was dying before her eyes. One only thing she was assured of: God is Love. Whatever Love should lay upon them, Love would strengthen them to bear.

Day after day she had urged the pledge: "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." And she laid it very humbly at His feet, saying: "I know nothing: do with me what seemeth Thee good." So she began to "abide in Christ." The peace of God began to flow in upon her. She no longer urged her wishes upon Him with an importunity that would not take No for an answer; yet prayer was more precious than ever. She poured all her longings, and her fears, her sorrow, and her love, into His heart of infinite sympathy, content that He—who can see the end from the beginning, who cares most for what is most worth having—should do with her and hers what He knew to be best.

One forlorn hope of recovery still offered itself, in the advice of a city physician, who was held an oracle in lung diseases. If he could be induced to come such a distance, might he not still save him? One never knows the full bitterness of poverty, till it enters into the question of saving a dear life. War times were hard for salaried men, whose incomes, always small, had not risen with the rise of all expenses. Mr. Cameron had spared nothing that could minister to Donald's comfort. The quarter's account was already overdrawn, and the parish collector met requests for money with dismal reports of hard times. The doctor's visit would cost a formidable sum, and there was hardly more than a shadow of hope

it would do any good. Theodora saw a way through the difficulty. The "piano money" she had saved from her teaching, she had drawn upon to pay the expenses of her journey to Cincinnati, and her board while there; she suddenly bethought herself that there was enough left to pay for the physician's visit. So he was sent for.

Donald was confident he would know how to cure him. The two sisters took a holiday from their discouragement. The father and mother, more experienced, dared open the door, only a very little way, to hope.

The very presence of the doctor was encouraging. He looked as if he had life to spare. He received the patient's answers to his numberless questions as if they were all that could be desired. Theodora watched his face anxiously while he examined her brother's lungs, and could discern no change in its calm, pleasant expression. Her pulse beat strong with hope. After the examination, he gave minute directions, wrote some prescriptions, drew Donald into talk about army affairs, telling an intercsting anecdote or two, and left his patient with cheerful looks and tones, telling him to take the comfort of feeling that he was suffering for his country just as much as if it were a wound instead of an illness. He had given no opinion, but his whole air was inspiriting. Donald's cheeks and lips were flushed with the bright color of his boyhood, his beautiful eyes beamed with new life, and his tones were firmer than they had been for weeks.

"I do not know just how much cod-liver oil he said. He hasn't gone yet, has he? Run down and ask him, please," he said to Theodora.

As she entered the sitting-room, she met a look of sad submission in her father's face; her mother was in tears. The physician's manner was very grave. She stopped

short with her hand on her father's shoulder, and looked at the doctor, while her heart paused in its beat.

"He can give us no encouragement, my daughter," said her father, gently.

"Is there not *some* hope?" she asked, turning to him appealingly.

"'While there is life there is hope.' In that sense there is hope for him; no other, I am grieved to say."

"How long—" the mother began to ask, but the question shuddered into tears.

"It is impossible to say; it may be days, it may be months."

A slight sound in the room above reminded Theodora that Donald would wonder and make inquiries if she delayed. She must ask his question and hasten back.

"In close hart shutting up her payne,"

she went into the sick room, met the hopeful eyes with an answering glance, answered his inquiry in a voice which sounded to herself like that of another person. He was sitting in a large rocking-chair, and she took refuge behind it, standing, and running her fingers through his hair, as he liked to have her.

"I don't know, after all, but I shall study medicine when I get well. Such a doctor as that can do more good than a minister, I believe," said he.

"It is a noble profession."

"I should like some of that wine-jelly now. Feed me, won't you, please. I am a little tired."

Her heart quailed as she took the glass and knelt beside him to put spoonful after spoonful between his dear lips, with his eyes full upon her. She could govern her voice so long as she was out of sight.

"Did he say how soon he thought I should be about?"

"No, dear; I saw him only a moment, you know. Isn't it nice that you like this jelly! It is so nourishing."

Her face betrayed her. He saw the subtle change which no will could control.

"Doesn't he expect me to get well?" he asked, laying his hand on hers to check her, as she was offering him another taste.

His touch was hot and tremulous; his eyes demanded an answer. She could not lie to him; she could only lift her wet, yearning eyes one moment to his face.

He pushed aside the glass and turned his head.

"It is easy for a stout, six-footer like him to set by and doom a man to death."

"Oh, not that, darling!" she could not let him be unjust even then. "He said there was always hope—while there was life."

The words almost died on her lips; they were more hopeless than no hope.

A quick, nervous cough was the only answer. She caressed and kissed his hand, and laid her cheek upon it.

"Why couldn't I have been shot outright!" he burst forth, passionately. "There were bullets enough and to spare. This dying by inches is horrible!"

"We should have lost all these precious months together," she murmured, not knowing what to say, though her heart was ready to burst for him.

"Theodora," he broke out, vehemently, "you do not know what it is to have Death playing with you like a cat with a mouse, letting you run, and then pouncing upon you again. I am not afraid to be dead, but I should have been glad to die one death, and done with it."

"*The Lord killeth and maketh alive; He bringeth*

down to the grave and bringeth up," that was really the only comfort. He was not the victim of the pitiless monster—Death. He who spared not His own Son was watching over him in love. But he knew that as well as she. She could not remind him of it in the bitter outburst of his pain. She could do nothing but love him and silently pray. She stood beside him, and drew his head to her breast. Her tears dropped gently on it; she kissed his hair, his forehead; she caressed his cheek. The hectic fire burned in it more hotly than ever. Suddenly a terrible fit of coughing shook him, and the dreaded blood-stain showed the havoc this excitement was making. His father came up, and taking him as when he was a child, placed him on the bed. The son's arms clung about his neck a moment, as he laid him down, and his eyes were raised to his face. He read there not only love and pity, but the heavenly calm of a spirit which has passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death into the Land of Beulah. It seemed to quiet and strengthen him. A faint smile flickered over his face.

XXXII.

SUNSET.

DONALD required very little care during the night, but Theodora slept in the adjoining room, ready to come at his call. She lingered about him that evening, her heart aching to do something for him. She had put the water, and the slippery-elm, and the little bell on the stand beside him, shaded the night-lamp, and stood trying to soothe him to sleep, by brushing the soft hair, which seemed darker than ever since his forehead had grown so pale beneath it. But the long eyelashes would not close over. At last, he reached up, and taking her wrist, drew her hand down and kissed it, saying:

"You must go, dear. You are too tired already."

She dared not stay, for the eyes he lifted to her face were so full of mournful beauty, that she could not look into them without crying. So she kissed him, and stole away to her own room. She sank on her knees by the bed, and hid her face in a pillow to stifle her sobs. Her brother liked to have the door open, and he must not hear a sigh. Her whole soul poured itself out in passionate prayer. It was not now that he might live. She asked that, indeed, but it was with an "If it be possible," even like our Saviour's, knowing that it was not possible. Her one importunate petition was that the dear soul might have the victory over death. By degrees, importunity was calmed into trust. Her form no longer shook with

the agonizing intensity of desire. She felt the brooding love of the Father. She gave over her dear one to Him who is the Resurrection and the Life.

Softly she rose and went to the window. The moonlight was streaming in, and lay upon the floor checked by the shadow of the sash. She sat, for a little, looking out on the garden, the hill, the meadows, listening to the river murmuring its nightly chant for the sleeping village. Sweet memories of Donald flooded them all like this tide of moon-beams. Soon they would be *only* memories!

Not bitter nor rebellious, but tender and yearning, her heart told over its beads of recollection, and breathed with each a prayer of grateful love. With the pure, soft light that bathed her face, fell the smile of the Comforter upon her spirit. She grew strong to stay up her beloved even to the gates of death.

She lay down in her wrapper, but she slept as a mother sleeps, ready to start at a sound. Donald did not call. Twice in the course of the night she stole in to see if it was well with him. Each time he was lying awake, his eyes beaming solemnly out of his white face.

"You don't sleep," he said, when she came for the third time. "I shall wear you out if you cannot rest at night. Really, I don't need anything."

"Yes, dear, I sleep, but my heart waketh, and when I happen to open my eyes, I love to see that you are all right."

"I *am* all right," he said with a rare smile; "so go to sleep, and don't worry about me."

There was something so reassuring in his way of saying it, that when she had turned his pillow, and given him drink, she went back and gave herself up to sleep soundly till the robins called her in the morning. It was always

a relief to her when she woke, to hear even a cough from her brother's room. Perfect stillness shed an unspoken fear upon her heart. It beat thick as she stepped into her slippers, and walked noiselessly across the floor.

She blessed the very sheet that showed the faint motion of his breath. "My beautiful Donald!" she said silently, while her lips quivered and her eyes filled. Every sight of him seemed precious now, under the shadow of that day which must soon hide him forever. She stood leaning on the back of an easy-chair, far enough off so that he should not feel her presence, and let her eyes take their fill of gazing at him.

The boy's radiant color, the soldier's hardy bronze, were gone, but so was all the ghastliness of the half-starved prisoner; and now the face, white as marble, showed in every outline an exquisite blending of delicacy and manliness. It seemed to her, as the pure light of dawn fell upon it, that there was a heavenly peace in its ethereal beauty which she had never seen before.

All at once, his eyes opened and she came forward quickly, that she might not seem to have been watching him. He held out his hand to her and smiled.

"It is all right, Theo.," he said, as she knelt to bring her face near his. "'Though He slay me, yet I trust in Him.'"

His eyes were luminous with some new joy. Her prayer was surely answered. She dared not try to speak. She only laid a caressing hand on his head, and tried to wink back the tears.

"I have been headstrong and rebellious," he said; "I wanted so much to live and do something. But God knows best. He could have given me life if He had chosen. I would not take it out of His hands if I could; not for worlds."

"'Sweet to lie passive in His hands
And know no will but His,'"

whispered the sister.

"Yes, I think I have come to that. I gave myself to my Saviour long ago, and I ought not to have doubted He would know what to do with me. I have been all over it with Him, during the night, and He is so wise and so tender, it grieves me to think of resisting Him as I have."

"You did not mean to resist," said she; "it was only natural to feel as you did."

"But I should have remembered in whose hands my breath is. I should have liked to live; there was a good deal I hoped to do, and then I love you all so much. But if He sees better for me to come to Him now—why, I am ready." He spoke cheerfully and ended with a smile.

She dared not try to speak, but pressed his hand and rose to leave him for a few minutes.

"One thing more," he said, keeping her hand a moment. "Let us have just as good a time as we can while I stay. I want you all to think and talk of it just as it is; not that any dreadful thing is going to happen me, but that I am to go to Heaven, one of these days, and after a while all the rest of you will join me there. Let us get the good of the time we have together."

And they did. Love taught Sorrow to hold her peace.

"O God! it was a time divine,
Rich epoch of calm grace,
A pressing of 'their' hearts to Thine
In mystical embrace.

"The work of years was done in days,
Fights won and trophies given;
For sorrow is the atmosphere
Which ripens hearts for heaven.

"Eternal thoughts in simplest words
Fell meekly from their tongue,
While the fragrance of Eternity
To their silent presence clung."

They talked much of the fair country to which he was going.

"I do not try to imagine just how it will be," he would say; "I only know 'I shall be satisfied.' Whatever HE has 'prepared' will be sure to suit me."

Yet it was not so much the country as the Lord of the country, he liked to have them talk about. The nearer came the hour of meeting Him, the more longingly he looked forward.

"I shall know as I am known," were words often on his lips.

The simple things of every day amused and entertained him still. He often made the rest of them laugh when tears were ready to start. Nothing touched them so much as his tender care for them, in little things, weak and suffering as he was.

One by one, he sent for his old friends, and had sweet talks with them. With dying eloquence he urged the love of Christ upon them, and not in vain.

Merlie Myers came from his room, crying, as if her heart would break. "I always thought it would be horrid to die," she said, "but I never saw anything so beautiful in my life."

As for Alice, it was like a revelation to her. Doubts which had haunted her mind for years, slunk away before

the clear shining of his faith. Her face was paler than its wont, in those days, but it began to show a new peace.

Larabee was often coming to do what he could for the invalid.

"Dear, faithful fellow!" Donald would say, "he must know his Saviour, and he will, yet." The hope was not deceived.

Years after, when he first owned Jesus as his Master, he said he never could forget how Lieut. Cameron used to pray for him.

The other children were sent for; Miriam and Faith came at once. The only desire Donald had left was to see his brother once more; but whether that wish could be gratified was doubtful. Robert, with his command, had been transferred to the Potomac in the Spring, at the same time that his Major-General had been made Lieut.-General. But it had been a season of hard fighting, and he had not yet seen the time when he thought it right to leave his brigade, for even a day's visit at home.

It was one October afternoon that the dreaded whisper went around the household that the end had come. Theodora had seen death many times—her sisters, never. She remembered the hard rending asunder the soul and body she had witnessed more than once, and hid her face to pray that God would take him gently. He surely would, she thought, he was so ready for Heaven. All the sisters had a secret hope that some bright vision would be given him, that he would catch sight of the angels before he let go of them. But no; it was to be faith, faith only, to the very last breath.

He lay panting on the dear bosom that had nursed him in babyhood; his sisters stood or knelt behind him, fanning him, kissing his hand, murmuring last words of

dearest love; his father sat by the bed often, repeating strong words of hope. The sufferer seemed to drink them in. Even this road his Saviour had trodden before him.

A paroxysm of pain almost took away his breath; then it labored on again. "Oh, Lord, how long?" groaned Miriam. She could see him die better than she could see him suffer. He looked up with heavenly meekness, and whispered: "*He loves me just the same.*"

The afternoon wore on. The body was loth to part with its bright spirit. Fond murmurs, half-hushed sobs, the cordials held to the failing lips, told the dying one how love longed to buoy him up till the dark river was passed. He could not speak much, it was enough to breathe; but a deathless faith beamed from his eyes. Now and then some grateful or courageous word, with difficulty spoken, seemed like to break their hearts.

"I wish I could help you, my dear child," said the father tenderly. "But the Saviour can and will. He hung in dying agony from the third hour to the ninth, you know."

"It is enough for the disciple—" gasped Donald with earnest looks.

"'That he be as his Master and the servant as his Lord,'" said his father, finishing the sentence for him. "Presently you will be with Him, and all this trouble of getting to Him will seem like nothing."

In gentle, cheering tones, he repeated the Redeemer's parting message: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive

you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also."

Long streams of Autumn sunshine lay across the room. The crimson woodbine rustled at the open window. They heard the rush of the daily train across the meadows, and the distant whistle of the locomotive at the station. It seemed a profane sound to intrude upon that vestibule of Heaven. Five-minutes later, wheels dashed into the yard at full speed; Miriam stole from the room, and the next moment a quick footstep was heard on the stairs.

Donald had been lying as if only half-conscious, his eyes closed. At the first sound of that footfall, they opened and turned towards the door. A beautiful light broke over his face, and he held out his feeble arms as his brother appeared.

"Dear old boy!" he whispered, as the stalwart General knelt beside him with swimming eyes. He laid his thin hand on the shoulder-strap, and said, with his old boyish smile, and a glance upward, "I shall rank you—after all."

That heart-breaking smile was more than Robert could bear. He gave a great sob, then mastered himself. "Do stay a little longer, Donald. I must see you a little while!"

"Time enough, by-and-by," he whispered. Slowly his eyes traveled around the dear group with a look of love for each. "All together again, pretty soon—and Jesus, too;" they all saw the smile, Robert caught the words, and repeated them aloud, adding softly: "And they shall go no more out for ever."

"He wants to speak to you," said Faith to Theodora, whose face was hidden on her shoulder. She bent over him and listened.

"Send my prison Bible to Vince—say I loved him to the end."

"Yes, darling, I will."

He lay breathing more and more faintly, while day faded into twilight. Suddenly, as if in haste, he whispered:

"Kiss me, mother!"

She folded her arms around him, and while she poured out a heartful of yearning in the last kiss, the father bowed his grey head, and said, solemnly:

"Father! into Thy hands we commend his spirit."

One more fluttering breath, and

> "The sun eternal breaks,
> The soul immortal wakes;
> Wakes with its God!"

XXXIII.

SILENCE.

THE bleakest day of bleak November. Theodora Cameron has come in with cheeks and eyes bright from battling the storm, and now, waterproof and rubber boots put to dry, she sits by the sitting-room fire, opening the letter she has brought from the post-office.

Her mother is in her old place by the window near the plant-stand. She drops her book in her lap to gaze at her child; she is so glad to see her looking fresher than she has for weeks. Patient and trustful as she has been, she could not help flagging a little when she no longer had Donald to keep up for. Even while the mother was rejoicing in it, the healthful color died away and the face became wan.

"What is it, my dear? Is there any trouble?"

"No, mother. It is a little sad; that is all."

She handed her the short letter and went out of the room.

It read:

"—— Illinois Reg't, —— Army Corps,
"*Near Chattanooga, Oct.* 28, '64.

"My Dear Friend:—Donald's Bible, with your letter and his parting message, came last night. They will be kept among my most sacred treasures. You are quite beyond any poor comfort I could give. The Great Comforter Himself has given you a heavenly peace I would

gladly share. God knows I have need enough of it! These are dark days to me.

"I once promised Donald that some friend should write, if any chance of war ended my life. By your leave, I will still count the promise binding, in the hope that you may care to know what becomes of his 'Vince.'

"Whatever happens, if we never meet again, it may be something for you to know that the thought of you never comes into my mind without bringing light and strength. When, indeed, is it ever out of my mind!

"It is time to stop. If God has one blessing to bestow, better than all others, may it be yours.

"Faithfully, VINCENT ROLFE."

The girl was glad to get away from her mother's too observing eyes, for that letter had sent a chill to her heart. It was a good-bye. It took it for granted she was never to hear from him again, unless she heard that he was dead! And she had so many things to tell him! His letters were such a comfort! And then there was a tone of hopeless pain in it, which was altogether unlike him. As if to hear him say something different, she opened the drawer of Donald's desk, which was half-full of his letters, and read again the last, which had come only three days before, written immediately after receiving the announcement of his friend's death, which she had telegraphed, as he had asked her to do. She did not need to read it; she already knew it by heart—that tribute to her brother had been so precious to her. He knew him better than any one beside themselves; he was never lavish in praise, and he spoke of him with such strong, admiring love! At the last he said:

"Except my mother's death, this is by far the deepest

grief that I have known. Yet it is your sorrow, my sweet friend, that I feel more bitterly than my own. If I could bear it all for you, how thankfully I would do it! That I cannot be near you, nor do you one little service in your great trouble, is the hardest thing I have to endure."

She did not feel at liberty to write again, and yet there were so many things, every day, that she wanted to say to him! His frank, sympathetic letters had drawn her into the habit of writing him nearly everything that was in her mind. Not to be able to speak to him or Donald, either, was hard. Death had taken away one, and life the other, and life was more cruel than death; Donald never would have left her of his own accord, but Rolfe—had he not chosen to drop her? She called up her womanly pride; did she want anything of him if he did not of her? But as she read over his old letters, they were so full of devoted friendship, of manly appreciation of her womanly help, that pride died away and her heart asserted that he *did* want something of her. Was that letter the very last, after all? It sounded as if he was suffering, and perhaps she could comfort him. Did he not say as much, in fact? Was it not a false delicacy that forbade her writing at least one little note in response to his last kind words? Surely it had been too dear and strong a friendship to be broken off in this blind, miserable way! She would write just once more. For the two weeks required to send a letter and get a reply, she was happy and expectant. Then she began to watch the mail, eagerly—anxiously—despairingly. No answer ever came.

At first, her strongest feeling was one of deep chagrin.

"He might at least have answered. He has cut short the correspondence as if he was afraid I should think he meant something!" she said to herself with burning cheeks. Away down in those regions of the heart which consciousness chooses to ignore, she did think he had "meant something." Though he had never said it, in so many words, the subtle breath of love had perfumed with its sweetness every letter he had written her for weeks before the last. She had called it sympathy, but she knew better. And now he had suddenly withdrawn into utter silence, craving Heaven's best blessing upon her, saying, with the last breath, that she was never out of his thoughts, and that she brought him light and strength.

A dreary sensation of being shut out in the cold weighed upon her. Whatever it meant, it could not mean that he was fickle. It was more necessary to her loyal, aching heart to believe in him than to have him care for her. He had said nothing that a tender, faithful friend might not say. She had been a foolish girl to think so much of it. She hardly ever spoke of him unless it was with her youngest sister; sometimes it seemed as if she must talk of him, and Jessie was an unsuspecting child. But the unsuspecting child was romantic; Col. Rolfe was a hero in her imagination; he was just good enough for her idolized sister; she had it all planned, and she did not like the way matters were going.

"I think it is mean of him not to write any more!" she declared, at last.

"What do you mean?" asked Theodora, with displeasure. "Why should he write? He was Donald's correspondent, not mine."

Jessie concluded she had made a great mistake, and

they did not care anything about each other, after all. But it was too bad.

So the young lady flattered herself that no one saw she was missing him. When her mother sent her off for a long walk or ride in the crisp air, or brought home an interesting book for her to read, or invited some old friend to spend a few days, she never betrayed that she divined that this daughter was suffering any trial save that which was common to them all.

Theodora tried to enter into all these things, to make it pleasant for the rest, and not to mind herself. But a healthy young heart will clamor for happiness. Hers had carried a weight of care and sorrow so long that it demanded satisfaction. It wanted to fill out the circle of life's loves. It complained that gifts should have been pressed upon it which it could not take, and this one only thing it craved should be denied. "I could have loved him," was its simple sentence. It was lonesome to leave him out of her life; it was not to miss him only, it was to miss a great part of herself.

Finally this rebellious heart grew so importunate that she turned upon it severely:

"What are you, that you should have everything you want? I do not suppose there is more than one person in a hundred gets the thing he wants most of all, and why should you be the hundredth person? What if you haven't the most and the best—you have more that is good and dear than most people have."

It cowered somewhat under this scolding, and tried to be reasonable, but it still kept up a quiet moaning; so she took it in hand more gently:

"Don't you believe God loves you? He will give *you what* is really good for you."

"Love would be good for me," muttered the wilful heart.

"Perhaps it would have been, if you had been better yourself; but you are a foolish, idolatrous kind of heart—you want some one to worship. Perhaps He sees this is the only way to make you strong in yourself and in Him. You are willing to suffer for that, aren't you?"

"Yes," came the answer, very like a sigh.

"Then be a brave heart! There is work enough to do! The service always stays, whoever goes. You can be poor, and yet make many rich."

With that she began to live in the lives of others more than she ever had before. She crept very close to the Master, and learning every day from Him, she carried to other souls the lessons He taught her. It is wonderful how every deep experience of life opens our eyes to fresh meaning in common things. We express our new emotions, and are surprised to find the expression nothing different from what we have read or heard a hundred times. We suddenly discover that the old adage, the well-known text, the familiar hymn, was full of startling truth.

When we first come into the great family of the bereaved, we can hardly understand that people all about us have been suffering this which has befallen us, like a strange thing under the sun. Donald's death had brought the minister's family and the parish into tender sympathy with each other. A good pastor, like a good physician, is beloved with that love given only to one who has held us up when heart and flesh were failing. His presence is blended with the most sacred passages of family history. There is felt for him that peculiar gratitude which is reserved for the soul's benefactors.

Now that they saw the Camerons smitten, stricken of God and afflicted, their people seemed bent upon pouring

back into their bosoms, good measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over, all the kindness and succor which had been given to themselves in their trouble. So it was that not only the father and mother, but their daughter, as well, found every house and heart in the parish open to her. It is a beautiful thing in God's providence that no soul can gain a victory for itself in the most silent hour of its own deep solitude without kindling other souls with the electric touch of courage. "None of them that trust in Him shall be desolate." In the strong support of the Saviour, in the noble pain of patience, in the discovery of hidden strength within oneself, there is a rare, heroic happiness which tame prosperity knows nothing about. Theodora was not desolate.

She went back to her art with earnest study. She felt it was time for her to be at work again. But where? She had slipped out of the ranks, and hardly knew how to find her way back. She wrote at a venture to her old music-teacher, Miss Scott, who had gone from Rockbridge to Boston, years before, and had become a successful teacher there. She replied:

"If you can only come within three days, I think I can get you in, as contralto, in our church. They are in search of a new singer; there are two or three who will be pressed, but I know you sing better than either of them. The organist is a friend of mine, who believes in my judgment, and he says, come. I have more piano scholars than I know what to do with, and can easily start you with a small class, which will be sure to grow, if you are as faithful a worker as you used to be. You must be here so that the committee can hear you sing *Thursday* night. Don't fail."

Accordingly, she made her appearance before the dreaded Boston committee, Thursday evening, and went back to Miss Scott's boarding-place with her, feeling that she had sung in a mechanical way, never forgetting that she was a candidate and they were critics. However, one of the gentlemen called the next day, said some kind things about her performance, which put her at her ease, interested her in talk about music, and almost before she knew it, had her singing. He ended by engaging her at a good salary.

In a few weeks, she had the pleasure of seeing that she had gone beyond their expectations. She began to be much petted and flattered as a singer.

"I don't know but I am in a little danger of having my head turned," she wrote her mother; "but I hope to keep it straight by remembering that it's only the nice things that I hear—of course there are plenty of the other sort said. I remind myself, besides, that compliments mean no more, paid to me, than I see they do offered to other people.'

Miss Scott was one of those energetic and beneficent old maids, who, having settled the main question of life for themselves, take pleasure in managing the affairs of their younger friends. She was a fine teacher, with an inexhaustible working power, whose shrewd sense and untiring spirits had won her many friends. Theodora could not well have had a better sponsor and adviser. She urged, as the best economy in the end, that she should take board at the same house with herself, although it was a somewhat stylish and costly place. She did so, and found an interesting variety of persons among her twenty

fellow-boarders, all of whom seemed to look upon Miss Scott as "a character," whose opinions were to be respected.

The handsomest suite of apartments in the house was occupied that Winter by the Bowyer family, from some place in New York. The first day she saw them at dinner, Theodora noticed with them, at the other end of the table, a tall, slender, fashionable young lady, who looked strangely familiar. She was talking with a kind of galvanized animation to the gentleman beside her, and when he left the table, subsided into a languid indifference. Presently, a turn of the head gave a fuller view of her face, and she recognized Miss Flora Van Ritter, considerably faded, a shade coarsened, but very much herself, after all.

"A niece of Mrs. Bowyer's, spending the Winter with her," explained Miss Scott, in an undertone.

Miss Van Ritter was by turns patronizing, indifferent, confidential toward the singer. In the latter mood, she was beguiling one rainy March morning, in Theodora's "sky-parlor." She drew a brilliant diamond-ring off from her third finger, and put it on her first, saying:

"That is where that really belongs."

"Why don't you wear it there then?" asked Miss Cameron, glancing up from her Spring hat, which she was trimming.

Miss Van Ritter shrugged her shoulders. "What is the use of a girl's proclaiming to all creation that she's engaged? I like to enjoy my liberty while I have it."

"But what would the gentleman say?"

"Oh, I wear it on the first finger when he is about. I can manage him well enough. He dotes on me, poor fellow. Don't you know who it is? Guess. You know him. Our old friend, Benjamin Franklin."

"Is it so?" returned Theodora, with an interested smile. She did not pursue the subject, however; she thought Ben Walton deserved a better fate.

About New Year's, Theodora had received a kind note of condolence from Miss Fletcher, of Cincinnati. Its first sentence was: "I was deeply grieved to learn from Col. Rolfe of your dear brother's death." The letter was written with the utmost delicacy and kindness, and she answered it gratefully; but that first sentence, she found it impossible to allude to. That, she thought, explained everything. Stupid, that she had not thought of that before! She ought to be glad, she told herself. Miss Fletcher was a much more accomplished lady than she; lovely, rich, and gracious.

"We needs must love the highest when we see it."

She was far more worthy of him. If the sweetest thing life could have brought her was bestowed upon another, she must learn to accept the fact, and be unselfishly glad for them—Rolfe and the woman of his choice.

It is a great thing for a wounded spirit to make what the doctors call "a clean recovery;" to have no soreness, no distortion, left. That great thing had been given to Theodora. Once in a while, her heart would cry out, like a child which has been put to bed hungry; but in the main it behaved well. Love had only showed her, by dropping into her nature the plummet of pain, what depths of joy were possible to it; but it had left her a sweeter and a stronger woman than before.

Meanwhile, public affairs became more engrossing than

ever. The great tragedy had reached its last act. There came, at last, that memorable Saturday, when strangers were shaking hands for joy that the war was over—when the dense crowd of money-changers stood still in Wall street, to sing, with moistened eyes and heartfelt thanksgiving: "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!" Regiments which had long confronted each other in deadly strife, could hardly be restrained, till the articles of surrender were signed, from mixing like old cronies, trading jack-knives and tobacco, and exchanging recollections. The old Ship of State, instead of being broken up into pitiful rafts, had outridden the howling storm, and sailed grandly into port.

Only one little week, and that other Saturday broke in horror! Dismay, vengeance, grief, as of children for a father slain, struck dumb half a nation. It was sad, but it was sublime, to see, to feel, millions of hearts fused into one passion of loving sorrow for their true, rough, tender-hearted chieftain, so cruelly struck down.

Among the passengers who arrived in Boston by the early steamboat-train from New York, the first morning of June, was an officer of Sherman's army. He was bound for a point farther North, on private business of importance; but, having been charged with despatches for the Governor, he was obliged to spend a day in Boston. It was his first visit to that ancient and honorable town, and having sent his valise to his hotel and reported himself at the State House, he gave himself up to exploring the city.

It was such a day as Boston never saw before. Solid columns of people moved slowly along the sidewalks, with grave faces, silent, or speaking only as we speak in *sick*-rooms. Everywhere was to be seen the "pageantry

of woe." Those wholesale blocks of solid granite, which have since vanished in smoke, were black with draperies of the richest stuffs. From the windows of poor tenement-houses hung musty black aprons or scarfs. All along Washington street, taste and skill had labored to express in fitting symbols the love and honor felt for the murdered President; for this was the day set apart to his memory by proclamation of the Government.

It was six weeks since the assassination, and yet the stranger noticed that the people, instead of gazing at the sable trappings in idle curiosity, looked about with a sad thoughtfulness, as one might notice floral emblems at the funeral of a dear friend.

"There never was a ruler loved and mourned like this before, Colonel," remarked a sociable Bostonian, who happened next the stranger, in the crowd.

"I believe it, sir. It is a good sign for our people."

"Yes, sir. It is simple manhood they do homage to. Are you going to hear one of the funeral orations?"

"I think I will."

"Where did you think of going, if I may ask?"

"It is indifferent to me. I am a stranger here, and know little about your Boston preachers."

"Come with me, then, and you will hear the most eloquent discourse that will be given in the city to-day, and can have a seat, besides, in my pew."

"Thank you, sir," answered the officer, walking along with him.

"Lately from the army?"

"Directly."

Upon that began a conversation, the citizen asking questions and the soldier answering, which lasted till they mingled with the throng pressing in at the church doors.

The dimness of dark-draped arches, the hush of sadness, the droop of flags half hid in crape, the mute sweetness of pale flowers, subdued them as they entered. The organ's solemn thunder, the grand and tender harmonies of chanted Scripture, tones of reverent prayer, and strains of eloquent truth, gave voice to the feeling of the hour. Besides the sorrow of an orphaned people, there was felt, throughout the North, consternation, as of a ship's company who see their wise and faithful pilot washed overboard just as they enter the breakers of the harbor bar. This feeling, running in magnetic sympathy through the dense audience, grew painful in its intensity.

After the sermon, came a requiem, stately-sad as the march of a mourning army. Then all voices died away but one; one female voice, rich, sweet, and strong. From depths of grief it climbed to a triumphant faith. Like the silver trumpet of an angel, it poured forth the strong words of consolation, "The Lord is mindful of His own." When she ended, and the long sigh of released attention ran through the church, pulses beat strong with patriotic courage, and eyes were bright with the Christian's trust.

As the audience rose to depart, the Colonel turned quickly to his companion, asking:

"Can you tell me the name of your contralto singer?"

"Is that the one who sang the solo? I don't know one part from another."

"Yes; do you know her name?" He looked at the man as if he would read the name in his brain, if he did not happen to remember it.

"Oh, yes; I know perfectly. It's Miss—Miss—why can't I think! She came about Christmas, and we are very proud of her. Now, I have spoken that name a hundred times! Why can't I recall it? There is not

another quartette in the city that has so fine a lady singer, we think."

While the gentleman was beating his memory in hopes of shaking the name out of its folds, the officer was trying to catch a glimpse of the singer. The choir was at the rear of the church, which was darkened by funereal drapery. The pew which they occupied was far toward the front, and a massive pillar came exactly in range between. The packed crowd moved only by inches. By the time the two gentlemen made their way into the aisle, where they had an open view, not a person remained in the choir.

"Cameron—Miss Cameron!" exclaimed the Bostonian, behind his hat. "That's the name."

"I thought so!" returned Colonel Rolfe, quietly, but a little pale.

When the slow human river finally bore them out at the broad door, the Colonel's clear, quick eyes searched the solid mass of faces that filled the vestibule, the stairways, and all the space down into the street. To no purpose. He turned to his chance acquaintance, and said:

"If you can add to your kindness, sir, by helping me to learn Miss Cameron's address, I shall be greatly obliged. Her brother was a comrade of mine, and I am anxious to see her."

"Certainly. I will do so with pleasure. I do not know it myself, but I presume I can easily find out for you."

The sexton did not know, but supposed the organist did. The organist lived out of town, and had already hurried off to his railroad train. Well, no doubt the minister could tell. But the minister had gone to some public dinner, and would be riding in the procession in

the afternoon. Why, of course, any one of the music committee of the society could tell, if you only knew who they were. After considerable debate, the gentleman and the sexton made up their minds just who the three members of that committee were, and wrote them down, with their business address, for the Colonel.

"Are not places of business closed to-day?" he asked, as he looked at it.

"To be sure! As to their residences, that first man lives out at Roxbury—drives in every Sunday; and the next—do you know, sexton?"

"No. He used to live around the corner here; but he has lately built him a house over at the west end somewhere. I don't know where."

"It wouldn't be in the directory yet."

"And your third man?" asked the Colonel.

"He lives on Arlington street, somewhere. I can't tell the number; but it is not a very long street yet, and he is a well-known man. I think you might find him."

XXXIV.

SOMEBODY COME.

CONSULTING the directory, as he passed through the office of his hotel, Colonel Rolfe found the number on Arlington street, and, immediately after dinner, went to the house. The gentleman was out driving, with his children. Would be sure to be in by his dinner-hour—six o'clock. As soon as the span of sleek bays had landed their cargo of white-frocked, blue-sashed little girls, with their portly papa, Rolfe called again, and, with a word of apology, asked the information he wished.

As the gentleman was writing the address for him, he glanced up over his eye-glasses with a smile, saying:

"If you had been in civilian's dress, sir, I don't know as I should have given you this. We are expecting, every day, that some other church will be trying to get Miss Cameron away from us. But they won't do it. We are prepared to bid as high as any one. We know how to appreciate talent when we find it; and she is a great favorite. Did you hear her this morning, sir?" he asked, as he handed him the card. "That was a wonderful performance!"

Col. Rolfe did not give his opinion. He did not much relish hearing this young lady talked about, as if she were a marketable article.

As he crossed the Common, an orator was expounding to the listening multitude the exact motives of Providence

in removing Abraham Lincoln at that critical juncture. A golden sunset beyond the trees made the background of the scene. He was amused to find the house he had been seeking with so much difficulty, was just across the corner of a square from his hotel, in full view from the window of his own room. The shining African who answered the door-bell, said Miss Cameron was out—had no idea when she would be in. Rolfe stepped into the hall to write a message on his card for her, and while he was doing so, a strikingly stylish young lady appeared at the open door of the drawing-room, and said graciously:

"Excuse me, sir; but I am quite sure Miss Cameron will be in soon. Will you not walk in and wait?"

He thanked her, and accepted the invitation. He seated himself in a bay-window on the further side of the room, while Miss Van Ritter at a front window, went on to entertain, in her most brilliant manner, the gentleman who was calling on her, addressing occasionally a polite word to the stranger. Presently she tapped on the window-pane and beckoned to some one on the sidewalk.

"There she comes, at last," she said, glancing at the Colonel with a smile.

Theodora came in with a pleasant word on her lips for Miss Flora, and the acquaintance who was talking with her.

"You have a friend waiting for you," said Miss Van Ritter, glancing toward the bay-window.

The twilight was beginning to shade the large room. The officer, who rose to meet her, stood between her and the light, so that she did not see who it was till her hand was fairly in his. But he could see, in the faint rosy light which streamed over her, the gentle courtesy due a stranger in her peaceful face and womanly movements

as she came towards him, then the color flaming up in her cheek and dying away as suddenly, when, with her hand in his grasp, she looked up in his face and recognized him. She had no idea how sweet a sight that was to him.

He seated her on the tête-a-tête with him, and sat resting one elbow on his knee, leaning a little forward so as to look her full in the face as they talked.

She had much to ask about his adventures, which he told in a rapid, vivid way, peculiar to himself. She was surprised to learn, that for eight months past he had been in Sherman's army instead of the Division which she had followed as closely as the newspapers would allow. Suddenly he broke off a description of "The Great March," saying:

"But the time is too precious to talk about that. Tell me about yourself. You don't know how hungry I have been for a sight of your face, Theodora!" he added in a lower tone.

"I didn't know as you cared," said she, with a bitter recollection of the long silence.

"*Cared!*" His whole heart broke loose in the word. He turned his head quickly to the window; the grey eyes were almost black, the lips pressed together, and the face very pale.

Theodora was frightened to see what she had done, and vexed at herself for having said what seemed like a challenge.

"What in this world do you think I care for, Theodora?" he asked, after a moment's silence, fastening upon her, eyes so full of tender reproach that hers fell beneath them. It was an awkward question to answer.

At this moment, Miss Van Ritter came rustling across the room, saying:

"I beg pardon for interrupting you, Miss Cameron, but Mr. Folansbee here is wildly insane over your singing. I have been trying all my blandishments, but I cannot keep him off the subject more than two minutes at a time." As she spoke, she swung her train into position, with a furtive glance, to see that it was right, and stood leaning on the back of an easy-chair. It was an attitude she much affected, it gave her tall figure so graceful a curve.

Mr. Folansbee, a small, sallow gentleman, whose face consisted mainly of very black eyes and beard, had followed her, and stood combing his long mustache with the head of his cane.

"Now I throw myself on your mercy," Miss Van Ritter continued, throwing her head on one side, and spreading out her jewelled hands imploringly. "If you would consent to pacify this disagreeable creature with a song, I should be your debtor for life. I am sure your friend must be dying to hear you;" she smiled so blandly on Rolfe, that Theodora felt obliged to introduce him.

"Did you ever hear such a charming voice, Col. Rolfe? We are all infatuated over it, here."

The Colonel bowed coolly, and remarked that Boston was supposed to appreciate musical genius.

"Do persuade her to sing us one song!" said Miss Van Ritter, turning upon him one of her most persuasive glances.

Theodora saved him any reply, by saying:

"I am sure it would restore Mr. Folansbee's reason if he could hear you play that beautiful Polacca of Weber's. Have you ever heard Miss Van Ritter render that, Mr. Folansbee?"

"Never have had that pleasure," answered the gentle-

man, offering to hand her to the piano; "do gratify us, Miss Van Ritter."

"Oh, you revengeful girl! I dare say Col. Rolfe is familiar with it."

"I have been quite out of the way of music, for nearly two years, Miss Van Ritter."

"If I must then, you tyrannical people!" and with a shrug as if yielding to the inevitable, the young lady sailed away to the piano in the remotest corner of the drawing-room. In a moment, her bracelets were rattling up and down the key-board; she was swaying like a reed in the wind, her hands rebounding from the staccato notes as if the keys were red-hot, while Mr. Folansbee leaned on the end of the piano, admiring.

"That is fifteen pages long," said Theodora with a demure glance.

"Good! What a girl you are!" exclaimed her friend, and the smile of quiet amusement she remembered so well crept from his mouth up to his eyes. But the sober look over-shadowed it quickly as he said:

"Do you know what a cruel thing you said, Theodora? Could you ever doubt that I 'cared'?"

The matter-of-fact answer, "If you did, why did you have it so?" could not be given, so she simply grew hot in the cheeks, and replied, "You had been so kind a friend, I need not have doubted you would miss me a little."

"I *did* miss you just a little, as a man struck blind may miss the sunshine just a little."

Theodora felt awed by the suppressed intensity of his manner. She clasped her hands to keep them from trembling, but the lace at her throat shook with the beating of her pulses. Still her common sense demanded,

"Why did the blind man put out his eyes?" She did not speak, nor look up, but it must have been something proud in the poise of her head, something grieved in the line of her lips that revealed to Vincent Rolfe what she was thinking, and thrilled him suddenly with the sweet pain of knowing, "It has been hard for her, too?"

He spoke low and rapidly, making the most of the time the piano might cover.

"You don't know why I felt forced to give up your precious letters when I did. I had resolved I would never press my love upon you while you were struggling through your great sorrow. I wanted it should support and comfort you, without your feeling any responsibility about it. It was happiness enough for me then to love you, and try to help you. I did not wish to tease you with a question to decide. In fact, I did not want fulness of joy, if I could have had it, while Donald was going down to death. But I promised myself that when he had left us, I would tell you all, and win you, if love and will could do it. It was all I could do to keep from it in that first letter I wrote you after his death. But I thought it would be selfish then. Before the next letter, news came that my Uncle Henry, whom, you remember, I trusted perfectly, who had charge of all my affairs, had ruined himself, embezzled the funds of the El Dorado Oil Company, and sunk every dollar I had in the world. Besides the staggering loss, I felt the stain like a wound."

"Why didn't you let me help you bear your trouble as you had helped me bear mine?" asked Theodora, lifting to his face eyes so full of sympathy that for a moment he could not answer.

"I had come to the point of all or nothing," he answered. "I could not have written another letter with-

out putting my fate to the touch. I had pleased myself, thinking how I would shield you from care and labor, if you would let me—and now I had not so much as an honest name to offer you. The most I could do for you was to let you alone."

Miss Van Ritter was playing *pianissimo*, and Rolfe's voice was hushed, but his colorless face still spoke, and a certain controlled agitation, the more noticeable to Theodora because she had always seen him so easily master of himself.

Then he had loved her all the while—it was for her sake he had deserted her! She wished he could know that if he was in trouble it was her sweet right to be his comforter. Her hand begged leave to nestle a little nearer to his on the sofa.

A *crescendo* in the music allowed him to go on: "Just then we were suddenly transferred to Sherman's Corps, and for two months it was impossible to send letters North. Meanwhile I had time to conclude that a strong young man with some brains need not despair of making a wife comfortable, if he cannot give her all the luxuries he could wish. I knew there was one luxury I could give you enough of, if you liked it; you would never lack for love."

The warm, soft hand stole of its own accord into the soldier's brown palm, and was instantly folded in a strong, though tremulous, clasp.

He went on hurriedly: "We were just coming out to the Sea, and I promised myself I would write you by the first mail, when, in a miserable little skirmish, I got a shot which threatened at least to disable me for my business for life."

Miss Van Ritter struck a thundering chord, punished

the bass end of the key-board, then the treble. Rolfe looked up with a comic expression of despair, and Theodora drew her hand softly out of his.

"That dies hard," he said, "but it won't last much longer."

Another run, all up and down, a few tremendous chords, and the young lady took her handkerchief and heavy rings back from Mr. Folansbee's care, and whirled around on the piano-stool.

"I am greatly obliged to you, Miss Van Ritter," said Col. Rolfe, with an emphatic sincerity which amused Theodora. "A fine thing! I only wish it had been longer."

"Oh, insatiable! Are not fifteen pages enough? Come again, Col. Rolfe, and I will play to you all the evening if you like music so very much."

He bowed, and remarked that she was very kind, but at the same time the clock on the mantel tinkled for half-past eight, and he rose.

"Must you go so soon?" asked Theodora, her heart beating so hard she was afraid it would shake her voice.

"I have an engagement at the State House at a quarter of nine, and must not give myself another moment now. When can I see you in the morning?" he asked, with an expressive glance of dread at the unconscious Miss Van Ritter.

"Any time after nine o'clock." She did not understand it, but there was something in the way she spoke the matter-of-fact words which brought back the color to his pale face. He bowed good-evening to the pianist.

She rose, and gliding forward a step or two, stood playing with her rings.

"*I* hope your friend makes some stay in Boston, Miss

Cameron. 'Now this cruel war is over' he ought to have a long holiday. You soldiers are all such heroes to us, that we cannot do too much for your pleasure," she added, suavely, to the Colonel.

He bowed civilly, remarking that they had simply tried to do their duty, and gave his hand in good-bye to Theodora, saying:

"You'll not forget that poor soldier I was telling you about?"

"No;" she answered, "I hope he may see happier days."

"Thank you," he replied, with a flash in his eyes, which might have betrayed him if Miss Van Ritter had not been occupied bringing a long curl in front of her shoulder.

"What a charming officer!" she exclaimed, the moment he had closed the door. "Why did you never tell me about him, my dear? He was such a fine figure!" Mr. Folansbee inwardly deplored his insignificant proportions. "And such a military air. I noticed that the moment I saw him standing in the hall; I was not going to have him sent off, for it isn't every day such a Bayard darkens one's doors. So fond of music, too! I don't know how it is, but every one I have played that Polacca to is just so crazy over it!"

Theodora went out smiling at Rolfe's craziness over the Polacca, and fled up to her little room. She walked across the floor, singing in her heart—"Mine—mine—mine!" As she raised her eyes, they met their own reflection in the mirror. She laughed to find herself smiling. She whispered to the girl in the glass, "He loves me!" and the face looked back at her, joyous, tender, triumphant.

Then she turned to the bedside where she had knelt to breathe so many patient, trustful prayers, and hiding her

face on her arms, poured forth her soul to its Father in wordless love and thanksgiving.

Nothing gives unity to life like the sympathy of that one only Friend who can go with us through all, who sees the end from the beginning, and from beginning to end is working out His own high aims within us, when we know it was not. It may be that on some sunny day of the vast future, He will review our lives with us, and explain to us all the way by which He has led us.

A fore-gleam of such a day was shining now on Theodora. With Him who had loved her with an everlasting love, she lived over again the weary days of suspense and pain, and thanked Him for making the "repose of idolatrous affection" impossible for her—saving for her the untold riches of this love till He had made her humble enough to hold them subject to His will.

At exactly nine o'clock the next morning, Vincent Rolfe's card was handed Miss Cameron. Her breath fluttered a little as she took it. She cast a parting glance in the mirror to see if she looked "all right," and ran down with a faint but happy heart. He was standing near the door, in the drawing-room, to wait for her.

"How much did this dear little hand mean when it came creeping into mine last night?" he asked, still keeping it after the "good-morning," and looking at her as if his eager eyes would read her very soul.

"I suppose it must have liked the place," she answered with a quick, arch glance.

"Can I have it to keep, then?"

A half-mischievous, half-tender look rippled over her rosy face, then she answered: "If you'll take the rest along with it."

"I think I will!"

And he took her; held her fast, and sealed the contract with a long, hungry kiss.

Then he held up her face, putting his hand under her chin, so that he could look full in her eyes, and whispered:

"Do you love me, truly, Theodora?"

For answer, she threw her arms around his neck, and hid her face in the army blue.

"God bless you, darling!" and the cool, practical soldier rained pet names and kisses upon his love, till her cheeks were aglow and her eyes were shining with happy tears.

Steps were heard in the hall, and she sprang away from him. In came Mrs. Bowyer and her three daughters, dressed for a drive. As they entered, Miss Cameron was wheeling around a chair, saying in a hospitable tone:

"Can you not stay to sit down, Col. Rolfe?"

The Bowyers' seated themselves to wait for their carriage while the other two conversed on the state of the country. The moment they were gone, Rolfe exclaimed:

"I cannot stand this, Theodora! This drawing-room is worse than a house-top. I have only two days to be with you, and we must have them to ourselves, somehow. Shall we ride? You know the lay of the land better than I. Tell me how I can manage to have you all to myself this one precious day. What would you like best?"

She thought a moment: "Suppose we go down to the rocks at Nahant. It is too early for many people to be there, and the friendly old ocean has made plenty of nooks where we can be quiet. We could take a lunch and spend the day. Perhaps you would want a regular dinner, though?" she said deliberating; "the hotels would not be open yet."

He laughed and said: "I think I could do without a regular dinner to-day! Nahant it shall be."

What that long, bright day beside the sea was to the long-parted lovers, they must imagine who can. It is all that we do not see, even more that all we see, that swells our hearts in the presence of the ocean; and so it was with their happiness. It stretched out before them in boundless possibilities.

Every young soul longs for one who will understand it better than it understands itself. Theodora had long felt this powerful attraction in Rolfe. But now that his whole heart was laid open before her, she trembled with awe before her own image within it. It showed her all the heavenly possibilities of her own nature. Nothing is so humbling as a great love. What was she that this man's strong spirit should melt in tenderness at her touch? How could she breathe such inspirations into his life as she could not but see that she did? As Rolfe watched her, sitting there with clasped hands, and solemnly happy eyes, gazing far out to sea, he did not know how she was praying that she might become in truth all that she was in his loving imagination.

To him, it was perhaps even more than it was to her, to find himself so loved. Her life had been rich in all the home affections; but he, since his mother's death, had had no one who was his very own. He was liked, respected, loved, but there was no one who *belonged* to him.

When he held Theodora in his arms, and looked down into those beautiful blue eyes, beaming love upon him, and said, "My own!" he felt as much happiness as a man knows what to do with. In her he found already the sweet restfulness of home. He knew her nature was strong and true, fervent and tender; and she loved him

as he had hardly dared hope to be loved. It came upon him like a holy anointing, to set him apart to a nobler life.

"You have not told me about that wound yet," she said. "Is it well now? Just as well as it can be?"

"Yes; the muscles haven't their full strength yet, but it is coming back every day. It was here in my right arm; the ball lodged so near the large arteries that the surgeon hardly dared attempt to take it out. I was not willing to leave my regiment, at any rate, for a difficult, dangerous operation, until we had finished our undertaking and come around to the rest of the army. When we reached Goldsboro, I went up to a hospital in Washington, and had it cut out. It was a skillful, successful bit of surgery."

"But what had you done all this while? Wasn't it dreadfully painful?"

"Oh, no; it healed over with the bullet in, you understand. It made the arm almost powerless, but was not dangerous, so long as it staid just where it was. If it had worked along, so as to break through the wall of an artery, it would have been the death of me."

"So they had to cut right into the sound flesh to take it out, at last?"

"Certainly."

The arm and its owner got a good deal of petting just then, which was pretty to see and agreeable to feel; at least, the Colonel acted as if he thought so.

"But what had that to do with writing to me?" suddenly asked the young lady, looking up in his face.

"You don't suppose I wanted to offer you a wreck of a man, who was liable to kill himself at any moment by a little uncommon exertion, and had lost his means of

getting a living? As soon as I was well, you see, I started for Rockbridge."

"Oh, you foolish boy!" she exclaimed, her eyes filling with tears. "I care a great deal more about you than you deserve! I don't believe you know what love is, to imagine I wouldn't want you, just because you had got such a dreadful hurt doing your duty like a hero."

He had not much trouble, however, in proving to her that he did know what love was.

But now they had to give their whole attention to the tide, which was grandly assaulting their citadel of rock. It dashed its lavish jewels about them, flashing rainbow splendors, as if it meant to put their new joy into visible shape.

"The only thing to mar my perfect happiness," said Rolfe, "is, that I should have lost my property just when I want it most."

"You ungrateful young man, to be mourning for your property when you have just come into possession of ME!" cried the girl, drawing away from him.

"That is the very reason I mourn. You like beautiful things, and I meant you should have them, if I was ever so fortunate as to have charge of you."

"But they are not necessary to my happiness, Vincent. There are so many beautiful things to enjoy that cost nothing, like all this, to-day! Donald used to say I was fore-ordained to be a poor man's wife, because I had my mother's knack of making the most of things."

"Poor child! I did not want you to have that to do—"

He stopped abruptly, and she felt certain he had come near adding, "any more." For a moment she felt mortified that he had seen and pitied their little economies.

She was glad his money was gone. They would know and love each other more perfectly than as if he had never felt this discipline she knew so well. He saw the cloud that passed across her happy face, but did not understand it.

"You are a dear, brave girl, at any rate, to make the best of it," he said, putting his arm around her again, "and I hope the time will come when I can give you a home not unworthy of you."

"Don't you believe," she asked, drawing the heavy fringe of his crimson sash through her fingers as she talked, "that people enjoy a home they build up by degrees better than one they have only to order? Now, Vincent, if I did not think you had ability enough to take good care of me, I don't think I should love you."

"So your love is contingent on my providing for you! I'll make a note o' that," he said, laughing.

She laughed, too, but wouldn't take it back. "You know what I mean. If a man was a great genius, or had sacrificed his interest for some great good, or had been overborne by misfortune, or anything like that, it would be different, you know; but if a man just hadn't '*gumption*' enough to make a comfortable living for his family, in a country like this, I am sure I couldn't love him. Perhaps some women might."

Col. Rolfe seemed much amused at this view of the case, and sat leaning against the rock, with his hands clapsed behind his head, looking at her with a world of fond merriment in his grey eyes.

Suddenly she asked: "Have you had a letter from Miss Fletcher lately?"

"Yes; not long since. Why?"

"Do you hear from her often?"

"Once in two or three months; very nice letters she writes, too. *Why?*" he asked, more emphatically, sitting up straight, and turning her face around so that he could look into it.

She didn't answer; but he must have discovered something, for he cried:

"Good! My angel won't spread her wings just yet. I do believe she has a little spice of real human jealousy!"

Then she told him about it, much to his delight, apparently.

"By the way," he remarked, when she was through, "I saw your old friend, the aide-de-camp, do some brilliant and foolhardy things at Lookout Mountain."

"What can be the association of ideas, I wonder!" said she, looking up at him with roguish innocence.

"You are even with me, I confess, as you always are," he answered. "I did come shockingly near hating that young man, one while, I am afraid."

"But you didn't love me then."

"Well—there is a degree of uncertainty about that," said he, with a slow, quiet smile. "We hear about unconscious conversions. I rather think I was unconsciously converted even then."

"Do you object to my correspondence—with Miss Fletcher?" he asked presently, turning over some pretty pebbles she held in her palm.

"Oh, no; not if you are quite sure you like me the best."

"On the whole," he said, casting up his eyes as if he was carefully weighing the question, "if I know my own heart, my preference is, at present, decidedly in this direction!"

XXXV.

THE SONG SET TO A NEW TUNE.

OF people in love, there is the absorbed kind, who are no good to anybody; then the sentimental kind, who sicken everybody; and lastly, the radiant kind, who gladden everybody. For a while it is to be feared Miss Cameron's music-scholars found her a little absent-minded. Instead of listening to their humdrum exercises, she was too often floating off on the Elysian stream of her own fancies. In a short time, however, her sense of justice conquered, and she succeeded quite well in compelling her attention to the duty in hand. Meanwhile, her deep content rippled brightly over into other lives, and she was more to everybody for being most to her lover.

The last of June came a letter from Caro Torrington, which she was thankful to receive. She had heard nothing directly from them since that painful parting, three years before. From this long letter she learned that Mr. Torrington, the enterprise in which he had embarked his hopes and his funds being lost, had gone, with broken health and spirits, to the plantation of his father-in-law in South Carolina, and there died. He had been a member of the Confederate Senate, and had risked the more for the cause in which he believed the more desperate it became. "Grandfather and all are ruined in fortune," wrote Caro, "and I am determined to support myself, though poor mamma abhors the idea. It is the only

honorable thing for me to do. You used to praise me in music; do you think I could earn my living with it, after some more study? This morning mamma went so far as to say she would never trust me away from her to take lessons, unless I could be with you. Without giving her time to recant, I took that for consent, and ran off to write this letter. I shall not tell her about it, till I hear from you. I have a legacy from one of my uncles, safely invested, which would be enough to give me a year of city instruction, and start me taking care of myself, I think. My dear, precious Miss Dora, if I could only come and be with you once more, I should be perfectly happy. Aleck sends love. Pinky-Winky still talk of you, and put in kisses. It is our home now here at grandpa's; but, oh, Miss Dora, it is such a desolate place compared with what it used to be!"

This letter went to the quick of her heart. Mrs. Torrington had proved that she trusted her as of old; and it was delightful to be able to do something for Caro again. It instantly occurred to her that if she fulfilled her early promise she would do to slip into her place, whenever she should leave. Miss Scott, who did a good deal of good-natured scolding about her protégé turning away from her brilliant professional prospects for matrimony, entered into the project with sympathy; and they succeeded, with much searching, in finding a cheaper and tolerably pleasant boarding-place, where Theodora could have Caro Torrington with her in the fall.

By the middle of August, Colonel Rolfe's regiment was mustered out, and he came North to spend one delicious week with his betrothed in her own home.

Mr. Cameron and he found much to like in each other, but it was with Mrs. Cameron that he formed the warmest

friendship; it seemed so sweet to him to have some one to mother him once more, while to her it was the next thing to having Donald back, to have his dearest friend among them as one of themselves. He admired Miriam, sparred with Faith, petted Jessie, and altogether enjoyed Theodora's simple home-life in due proportion to herself.

But he was sober and pale the morning he was to leave her. If his uncle had treated him like an honest man, he thought, he might have taken her to himself at once, and placed her in a delightful home. Now, with his commission, he had given up his income, and must wait until he should find business and accumulate enough to start upon. Meanwhile how much they would be losing! The river-mist which filled the valley like a sea, hiding even the next house from sight, seemed an appropriate atmosphere as he stood at his window before breakfast, looking into the future with a great yearning for what he could not have.

Theodora walked down to the station with him. He quarreled with her a little, that she did not seem to share his impatience. She was too happy in things as they were to be over anxious to change them. They had started early, and as they sauntered along a by-path, she taught him faith and patience so sweetly that he grew strong to labor and to wait. The sun was burning off the fog; first it rolled away from the emerald meadows, and revealed the glistening blades of the embattled corn-field, the silver gleam of the quivering willow-hedges, and glimpses of the shining river; then it drew off behind the hills, and left them for the horizon, as if that were all; but at last, it broke its ghostly ranks and fled up the mountain sides, bounding the glorious scene by their proud heads alone, reared against an unclouded sky.

"It is a good omen, dearest," said the girl, as she stopped to give the last kiss under a clump of murmuring pines. "My dear old mountains are smiling upon you."

Early in the Fall, Rolfe had an opportunity to take an important engineering job among the Rocky Mountains. He went out to look it over, and found it involved some problems which he was deeply interested in solving; moreover, it would be profitable pecuniarily. The only and great objection was, that it might detain him in that wild region, and so delay his marriage for two or three years. Every day, as he saw some grand new landscape, he was saying to himself: "If Theodora could only see this!" Suddenly the query took possession of him, "Why might she not?" She was fearless, healthy, and fond of adventure. Her love of Nature would stand her in the stead of many comforts of civilization. His comrades had always credited him with a genius for making a comfortable camp out of the most hopeless materials. When his quarters were too rough for her, she could stay at the nearest town. He thought of one device after another for making it pleasant to her, till he was quite enamored of his project. Still he hardly dared propose it. If she favored it herself, would not her father and mother think him a barbarian for wishing to take her away before he could give her a quiet, comfortable home in some pleasant town? However, it was not his way to give up what he wished without trying for it. First he wrote to her in Boston, and while he charged her not to consent for his sake unless she liked the idea, he showed so plainly that his whole heart was in it, and painted in such glowing colors the life they might live "all under the green-*wood tree*," that she was completely won over. Then

they laid joint siege to the parental wisdom, and finally gained consent to their marriage in the coming Spring.

It was a week before the wedding. Robert, with his wife and two children, were expected the next day, and Vincent the day after. Caro Torrington and Miss Scott were coming up from Boston in time for the occasion.

The sisters had an old habit of loitering in Miriam's room for a chat, after going upstairs at night.

"Only six more of these dear old good-night talks, ever in the world!" said Faith, mournfully.

"You talk, Faith, as if I was going to be dead and buried after next Wednesday!" said Theodora, with a frown and a smile.

"Well, in one sense you will be. You never will be ours any more, as you have been. This strange man will always have to come between."

The smile got the better of the frown. "Why, I shall not love you any the less, child, because I have taken up the 'strange man.'"

"Theoretically," conceded Faith, with an incredulous shrug of the eyebrows; "but what good will that do us, if you care so much more about him as to leave us all and go off into that waste, howling wilderness, to live with him? The letters will come less and less frequently—I know how it is!—and you will never come home but that he will be clamoring for you to come back."

"Don't you expect him ever to come with me, I should like to know?"

"That will be worse yet. You will be all the time with him, or wanting to be, which is just as bad. Now, Theodora, confess!" said she, throwing herself down on a footstool at her sister's feet, resting her arms on her

knees, and looking up in her face. "Now that the time draws near, don't you, really and truly, clear down in your heart, wish you were out of it?"

Theodora gazed down into the piercing black eyes fixed upon her, till the smile on her lips spread all over her face. "You ridiculous child!" she said, putting her hand for a moment under Faith's pointed chin.

"That is irrelevant," remarked Faith, without changing her attitude or turning her eyes. "I really want you to tell me."

There was a touch of sincere solicitude in her voice which Theodora could not but answer. Looking into the solemn blackness of her sister's eyes out of the soft, bright blue of hers, she answered, with due deliberation, "I do profess I see the fatal day approaching without the slightest shrinking in any corner of my being."

Faith turned her head with a sigh of mingled relief and amazement. "I cannot understand it! I cannot imagine myself caring enough for any mortal man, to be willing to bind myself to him for life. It seems to me, as the day approached, I should feel as if I must break away—run anywhere to escape. Only think, Theodora: what if you should live to see your golden wedding! Only *think* of living with him *fifty years!*"

Theodora burst out laughing. "Nothing would give me greater pleasure. Why, you silly child, that is the beauty of it—that it is going to last. That is what I marry him for—so as to be sure of him for a lifetime."

"But how do you know but you will get tired of him? How do you know but you may meet some one you would like better?"

Theodora did not seem to think of answering. Her eyes, fixed on the little flame of the lamp, were lost in a

dream of sweet content. Those weary months, when she had been bracing her heart to go through life without Vincent Rolfe, brought out in strong relief the blessed rest she had now in the thought of him. But Faith laid hold upon the hand which lay in her lap, listlessly holding a hair-brush, and shook it a little to bring her back.

"I want you to answer me. I feel a concern about you; and then, as a psychological question, it interests me. How can you be so very sure you never will get tired of him?"

Thus roused from her reverie, she made answer:

"In the first place, I thoroughly like him, so that I should enjoy having him always near me as a friend, if he were nothing more. In the next place, I trust him, utterly; and then, child, I *love* him! The very sight of his hand-writing warms every drop of blood in my heart."

"It is an inscrutable mystery!" exclaimed Faith, as if she had observed a new and wonderful phenomenon.

"I don't think so, at all," said Jessie, who was cuddled beside Miriam, on the lounge.

"Perhaps you will understand it for yourself, one of these days," remarked the eldest sister, with a smile.

"Never!" In fact, Faith did not like gentlemen, nor they her. They were afraid of each other. She shook out her black hair, and returned to the charge: "Suppose, now, you should find faults in him, after you are married, that you don't know of now, and suppose you should meet some one else who might have matched you better?"

"Of course, I shall find faults in him that I don't know of; it would be a very one-sided affair, otherwise; he will find enough in me. We will cure them, if we

can, and love over them, if we can't. The other supposition does not look alarmingly probable."

"But, if—"

"Well, then, to satisfy your psychological curiosity, I will consider even that odious *if*. If I were ever to come in contact with anybody I could possibly think of wishing in Vince's place, I would shun that person altogether, and I would cherish my wifely love as the most precious thing I had on earth."

"You are really too bad, Faith," said Miriam, from her corner of the chintz-covered lounge, untying her cravat, and drawing it through her white fingers as she spoke. "It is much more to the point to consider what we are going to do with you, after you graduate, this Summer."

"That is an interesting subject," said Faith; "if I have a vocation, I wish it would speak a little louder."

"We all think that she has a talent for writing," said Miriam, "at Downington. She has a pungent way of going straight to the heart of things which is really rare. Who knows but that is her calling?"

"I do!" answered Faith; "I like to write, when I have something to say; but my faculty is only a Summer-dried fountain—quite full and gushing after a great rain or a sudden thaw, but then, again, bare to the stones. It would never do to depend on it as a well to fill the tea-kettle from. It must be shockingly demoralizing for any one to undertake to live by writing, unless he has a perennial flow of thoughts worth giving to the world."

"I have often thought of that," said Theodora, undoing her braids. "What misery it must be to think you cannot have a new gown unless you can get some of your thoughts into the market to pay for it. An ordinary

gown, duly furbelowed, would cost several columns of ordinary thoughts."

"With a little extraordinary style to get them into notice," said Faith. "I do believe half the faults of style in magazine articles and books too comes of this very thing; people trying to earn a livelihood by writing who are clever enough to write well occasionally, but have not the capital to set up a regular business of it. They write something bright in the first place; then they and others argue that if they could do it once, they can do it as often as they please; and they venture upon it as a dependence. Don't you see, if life and experience have brought the wretched creature nothing fresh to say, he must still write something that will 'take;' and so he falls into a convulsive style. Having only a trite thing to say, he must say it in some odd sort of voice, or he cannot catch anybody's ear. And then he is liable to prattle out the very last thought or feeling he can find, turning his soul inside out. No, Miriam! I will become a tailoress before I will try to earn my bread and butter, writing."

"Well, then; we have heard what you are not going to do," said Theodora. "Now, I should like to know what you are going to do."

"Well, girls," said Faith, drawing up her slight figure, "I will tell you; though I am afraid you will not like it. I have thought a great deal about it, and I have made up my mind. I mean to go South and teach the freedmen."

The three sisters gave a simultaneous groan.

"Not in earnest?" cried Jessie.

"In dead earnest," Faith answered, and her small, pale face, gleaming out from the cloud of coal-black hair,

vouched for it that she was serious. "It is such a chance as does not come once in five hundred years. Robert and Donald did all they could for the country; now it is my chance. Those people are like a nation of babies, who need to be taught everything right away, and now they are eager to learn. I am certain that just now I can make my life of more account in that way than any other."

"But you are so outspoken and uncompromising, Faith. You will be sure to get into trouble," said Miriam.

"But I shall get out again."

"I am not so sure. Such teachers are by no means favorites with the Southern people. I can't bear to have you exposed to any danger."

"That is a reason for my going. I should not mind that so much as many would. I have prayed over it a good deal, and I think it is my duty to go."

And go she did; to meet adventures and do a work which made a whole family feel that she was their heroine.

After the two younger sisters had left the room, Miriam said, slowly tearing a letter in two as she spoke:

"I think, Theodora, I shall write Mr. Duncan a final No, and be done with it."

"You do?" asked Theodora, regretfully. "He seems very nice."

"I know it, but I have to remind myself of his virtues, every time, to keep up any great interest in him. It must be beautiful to feel as you do, but I never had that feeling for anybody, and I don't think I ever shall; the older I grow the less likely it is. Marriage would be nothing but a bondage without it; and so I do not think

I shall ever marry. If I can't keep my affections on one as you do, I must spread them over a broader surface · so there will be nothing wasted." She smiled rather sadly as she spoke, for there was great power of devotion under Miriam's tranquil exterior. However, she went on very cheerfully, "I have a plenty to fill my life, head, heart, and hands; motive to be all it is in me to be, and a great many to love me far better than I deserve."

"You are living a noble life, dear," said her sister, putting her arms around her, "and you will have a broader influence than I shall."

"But not so deep," answered Miriam.

"Wasn't it lovely of Mrs. Walton to send me this?" said Theodora, after a few minutes' silence, taking a lace shawl from a box on the table, and shaking out its gossamer folds. "The sweet woman! I wish I could see her. Vince shall take me there some time, after Ben is married. I know by this, that she would be glad to see me."

"Isn't it strange he can marry that Flora Van Ritter?" said Miriam.

"I don't know as anything is strange in that line. But I can see how it came about, I think. Did I tell you he visited her in Boston while I was there? I may be mistaken, but it didn't seem to me they were really in love with each other."

"I don't see as you are showing how it came about."

"You must know they have been engaged quite a long while. Didn't you ever notice, that often, when a man can't get the girl he loves, the next thing he thinks of is finding one that will love him?"

"I should not suppose she would answer that purpose very well."

"Oh, but she can be very devoted when she pleases. I think she was rather fond of him; and more than that, she thought him a good catch, so she laid herself out to capture him, and she succeeded."

"But how?"

"Oh, I don't know; the families are intimate. He has a feeling of honor about it, I suppose. The best wish I can have for him is, that she will *jilt* him before the time comes. At any rate, he is greatly improved in himself, and she can't spoil him if she doesn't make him very happy."

XXXVI.

LATER DAYS.

THE wedding was over and Col. Rolfe had submitted to be "led about like a tame bear," as he put it, and exhibited to his wife's relations before taking her away with him into the far country. They had come home again for one day before starting on the long journey, and while the sisters finished the packing, Vincent and Theodora went to spend a few last minutes beside Donald's grave. It was a sweetly lonely spot; a grove of fragrant pines, close by, were always murmuring their melodious dirge, robins were running in the grass, and white clouds sailed slowly overhead. Robert had lately placed a rustic seat under the mountain ash at the foot of the grave; they sat together thinking of the dear one, and saying little.

"Only a year and a half ago," said Theodora at last, "it seemed impossible for me to live without him, and yet I live, and work, and sing, and laugh, as I did before. Life is so strange! I used to wonder at people that they could go on just the same when the friends they loved best were taken away. It seemed heartless."

"*Do* they go on 'just the same?' I know things have never looked the same to me since my mother died, and yet I suppose nobody saw any change in me."

"That is it. The difference is too far in for outsiders to see. I think the world can never look again to me

just as it did before Donald went away. It does not seem so solid and enduring, and that other world seems so much more real since he is there."

"It has not saddened your life, Theodora?" asked Rolfe.

"Oh, no!" resting her arm on his knee, and looking up into his eyes with something deep, sweet, and immortal in the tender light of her face. "I feel as if my happiness was on surer foundations than it used to be. I have been down into the abyss, and found out for myself that though the heavens and the earth pass away, the Word of the Lord endureth for ever.

"And then, Vincent, I don't feel as if Donald—bless him!—had gone out of my life. It isn't so much that I imagine him with me, seeing me, and knowing my thoughts; I love better to think of him as close to the Saviour, learning glorious new truth of Him. Don't you know how beautifully his face used to light up when he was getting possession of some great thought? I love to think of him that way, drinking in the Saviour's words, better than as still mixed up with this poor life of ours. And yet—do you know what I mean?—the spirit of his life here has double power over me, now he is away; I love all the more the things he loved. Everything his hands used to handle, or his eyes liked to look upon, has a sweet influence for me. I should feel as if we were separated indeed, if I could be so out of sympathy with him as to be hopeless and gloomy when he is full of joy. Funny things amuse me, just as much as they ever did, and I think how Donald would have laughed at them. Good and beautiful things please me more than ever, I think, and I feel that they bring me nearer to him."

"Indeed I understand all that, my darling," said Vin-

cent, drawing her head to his shoulder. "It seems to me my mother has had tenfold power over me since she died. When she was with me, I know I used sometimes to try her fearfully, but she was no sooner out of my reach than it seemed a profane thing to disregard one of her wishes. Why couldn't I have been as tender of her dear heart when it was in my power to wound it!"

It was no feigned regret. His mother's memory was next to a religion with Vincent Rolfe, but there was comfort for him in the quick response of his wife's dear hand folded in his, and the soft voice that repeated:

"'How doth Death speak of our beloved,
When it has laid them low;
When it has set its hallowing touch
On speechless lip and brow.

"'It takes each failing on our part
And brands it in upon the heart,
With caustic power and cruel art.

"'It shows our faults like fires at night,
It sweeps their failings out of sight,
It clothes their good in heavenly light.

"'O, Christ, our Life! Foredate the work of Death,
And do this now!
Thou who art love, thus hallow our beloved,
Not Death, but Thou!'"

"So he will for us, my sweet one," said Vincent, fervor thrilling in his voice, and trembling in his face as he took her in his arms and held her close to his heart. "We will love each other so well every day that there shall not be one bitter recollection when the end comes."

"Don't you think," asked Theodora, smiling through tears as she held up her face to kiss him, "that year of

separation answered something the purpose of death—to show us our beloved?"

"Yes; at any rate, I feel a good deal as though I had got through death into Heaven," he answered.

"You needn't think that," she said, with a low laugh; "you have a good deal of severe probation to go through yet, if you are going to live with me."

She laid a wreath of White Everlasting on the grave, kissed the dear name on the head-stone, and turned away, saying through her tears:

"How sweet it is that he will be as near me there as here! Just as the Saviour is."

The next morning, she said good-bye, also, to the dear father and mother, Robert with his little girl in his arms, his wife and boy beside him, to Miriam, Faith, and Jessie, Caro, and Miss Scott, to all the old friends, and the beautiful valley, and turned her face toward the new life.

They spent a few days in New York, and saw a good deal of the Leightons and the Waltons. It pleased Theodora to see that her husband was at once on the footing of an old friend, with Mr. and Mrs. Leighton, and Mr. Walton. With Mrs. Walton, he did not make much progress. He lacked the faculty of being complaisant to people who were uncongenial to him.

Adèle was getting to be quite a Miss, taking on young lady airs, and using the genteel slang of her set with great fluency.

And dear little simple-hearted Lily! Theodora was grieved to hear, now for the first time, that she had died a year before. She and the mother wept together as they talked of it, still Theodora could not help thinking, despite her sympathy, what a consistent character Mrs. Walton

was! One would have thought the affliction was hers alone. She did not know what she had done that her child should be taken away, while other mothers were allowed to keep theirs. If she had lived to grow up, she could have borne it; if she had been sick longer, then she could have borne it. No loss ever came so suddenly or so bitterly. In a world like ours, it is something arrogant for any one to wrap himself in the pall of his own misfortune, and cry, "No sorrow is like unto my sorrow!" She found relief in blaming the physician; she dwelt upon the beauty of the little one's body in its casket, the taste of the funeral arrangements, the exquisite flowers sent in by distinguished friends, and the elegance of the child's statue, resting on a bed of marble lilies in Greenwood. These things were her consolation.

It was touching to hear Mr. Walton speak of the little girl whom God had taken out of his arms into His own. It seemed a comfort for him to talk about her with one who had known and loved her so well, as to recall her pretty ways, and her artless little speeches. It was easy to see that this deep grief, together with the grand passion of patriotism enkindled by the country's peril, had aroused the whole soul of the man. He had made a great advance in spiritual life. Things unseen and eternal had become real to him, while the accidents of life had dwindled to their due proportions.

Theodora noticed also a change in his manner towards his wife. He was much more forbearing. He took the selfish, petulant remarks which used to nettle him with patience, as if he never forgot that she was Lily's mother. Yet there was something sad about it, to their visitor. It seemed as if he had laid in the grave, with his little darling, the ardent hopes of his early married life. He

no longer expected from his wife, quick sympathy, or satisfying love, any more than he looked to see the dead come to life. She pitied him for that sorrow, unuttered perhaps to his secret heart, more than for the bereavement he talked about with such tender emotion. But there was an air of gentle fortitude about him which made her sure that, resting on the "God of all comfort," in the one trouble he had found balm for the other also.

The Rolfes left the city at evening. As they crossed the Jersey Ferry, a few belated gleams of sunset still glowed in the marble swell of the water. Still it was dark enough to make the colored lights of steamboats shine out like a gay and worldly kind of stars. A line of low hills rose dark against the horizon; all up and down before them the shore was spangled with lights. A close-reefed ship, with a tug grappled to her side, crossed their path, her cordage traced against the sombre embers in the western sky, looking, as Theodora remarked, "like some very intellectual man who walks on, his 'looks commercing with the skies,' while an energetic little tug-boat of a wife engineers him through the practical affairs of life."

"Like you and me?"

"Amazing! You are so absent-minded and unpractical! What would have become of you without me?"

"What, indeed! I shudder to reflect."

"Seven years! How long ago it is—it seems as if there were two of us—the girl who first came to New York seventeen years old, and me, and yet she was I and I am she."

"I should like to have seen that girl."

"She had a good many foolish notions—was full of antipathies and admirations, and vague aspirations.

Sometimes almost too happy to live; sometimes pretty blue. I don't know whether you would have liked her or not."

"To be sure I should," answered Rolfe, with a quick look, as if hurt for that seventeen years old girl he had never seen. "I can easily see that girl is one with my wife, but I believe she is more self-reliant, more sensible, more steadily happy now than then."

"I think you are right, Vince. Oh, it is too soon for this to be over!" she exclaimed, as the swash of water among the piles, the bang of the boat against its slip, and the rattling of chain-cable dissolved the beautiful scene.

"Not if we are to take the evening train."

They were planning their journey so as to take in a visit to the Bradleys, as the bride wished to show her husband the friends and the place she loved so much at Esmadura.

"It amuses me to notice," she said, as they were traveling the next day, "how I like people just for liking each other. I have taken quite a fancy to that old woman, and her strapping bumpkin of a son, for nothing else but that they evidently think so much of each other. And that gentleman, a little before us, on the other side of the aisle—I have only seen his back, but I like him for the way he plays with his pretty little girl, and lets her pull his whiskers. He has lost an arm, hasn't he? In the army, no doubt. Then I like him for that, too."

"You might discover other reasons for liking him if you could see his face as well as I can," said Vincent, giving her his point of view.

"Pelham Bell, to be sure!" she exclaimed, softly. "Do go and speak to him, Vince."

With a grimace of make-believe jealousy, he did as he was bidden, and Lieutenant Bell instantly came back, quite radiant, with his baby on his arm, to greet his old friend, while Colonel Rolfe sat down to entertain Mrs. Bell.

Theodora played with the charming little girl, and listened with keen interest to the story of Bell's adventures: how he had lost his arm, and how he had found his wife, a captivating Southern lady, and married her forthwith, while Gen. Blank held her father's house as his headquarters. "She takes good care of me," he added. "'Tis a tyranny, but a good one," looking over at her with a gay smile.

"By the way, you must know we are living in the Torringtons' old house."

"Good! How did it come about?"

"The house was restored to the family after the war. I always liked it, and as Mrs. Torrington prefers to live at her father's, I rent it of her. I had the pleasure of forwarding to her the furniture of that room you saved for her."

"Thank you for that. I think she understands me better now than she did that dreadful day. She often sends me pleasant messages through Caro. Do you know she has been with me in Boston? She has taken my place there, and is doing admirably. Just now, she is spending her Summer vacation in my home. They all like her, and she seems happy as a lark. She is making a beautiful young lady."

"Charming as her mother?"

"Yes, quite; with much more self-mastery."

"Sad affair about her father! He really believed the country was ruined when secession failed, and he couldn't survive it.

"But now, let me bring my wife and introduce her to you. She knows all about you. You must be sure and like each other, or I'll go and hang myself."

They did like each other, so he was not put to that inconvenience. And the families kept up a pleasant acquaintance afterward, though the two gentlemen never admired each other very cordially.

The Rolfes' first year of married life was a very strange but a very happy one. When two positive characters bend their necks to draw under one yoke for life, there cannot but be a little friction; but that was made easy for them, not only by an uncommonly deep and tender love, but by the self-control which the discipline of earlier years had given them. And then, there was so much to think of beside themselves! Such new phases of life and character—such grand, wild scenery—such comical and sometimes exciting adventures.

Theodora admired her husband as she never had her lover. The patient, indomitable energy with which he pitted his science against the stubbornness of Nature; the justice and kindness with which he treated his men; the protecting gentleness of his great love for her; his fearlessness; his absolute honesty; his religious character, which showed itself the more strong and symmetrical the more intimately she knew him—all this made it easy for her to obey the injunction of Paul: "*Let the wife see that she reverence her husband.*"

Their home was sometimes a camp, sometimes a log-house, sometimes a city hotel. Whatever else it might be, it was always a centre of good sense and kindness and Christian hospitality. Young men in the engineer corps, who had not been inside a home for months before, found in Mrs. Rolfe a womanly friend, who saved them from ruin. *Women,* discouraged with fighting barbarism on

the frontiers, took heart to begin again as they felt the air of genial refinement which she contrived to give her extempore dwelling. Old church-members, who had seemed to fall from grace in their graceless surroundings, were quickened by the touch of her warm piety. Rude young girls formed a new ideal of womanhood, while they admired this graceful, cultured, yet frank and cordial young wife.

Before the second year was through, however, it was time to be done roving. Rolfe took a house in a certain thriving young city, where he could oftenest be at home, and furnished it with every comfort which skill and taste could add to limited means. The narrow resources of the home tried him far more than they did his wife. To be obliged to consider the cost of a piece of furniture, a journey, or a set of books, was new as it was distasteful to him. She, having been forced to practice economy all her life, understood it much better than he did. His income was already twice that of her father, and when she thought of her dear mother laboring so patiently to make the two ends meet, she felt that her lot was a very easy one. She read the newspaper description of Mrs. Ben Walton's magnificent wedding and thousand-dollar presents without the faintest shade of envy.

A hurried letter to the home, written that Summer, when her sisters were visiting her, will give some idea of it. It began in Faith's handwriting:

"My dear Father and Mother:—I seem to be the only one who can keep hands off from that baby long enough to write you. I had prepared myself to see Theodora altogether taken up with it, but Miriam talks *about as* absurd a lingo to it as she does, and Col. Rolfe

sits and gazes at it, as it lies playing with its toes, as if it was the eighth wonder of the world, in its mother's lap. No doubt it will be an interesting child by-and-by.

"I have promised to go back to my people another year. I couldn't help it, they need me so much. I wish you could have heard Uncle Jerusalem pray for me the night before I came away. The last petition was, that I might 'walk de golden streets in silver slippers in de great gettin' up mornin'.'

"Vincent is going to take us to ride, and the girls say I must change my dress. So good-bye for the present."

Miriam took up the pen.

"It is a shame to put such a slight on your lovely grandchild, and call him 'it'! He is the most winsome little creature I ever saw, and Theodora makes a beautiful mother. Her home is delightful. It seems to me I should know it for hers, if I was set down in it without being told, it looks so like her. Vincent is always doing little kindnesses few men would think of.

"The letter you forwarded me, father, was an appointment as lady principal at Downington. Do you think I should be equal to it? Tell me what I ought to do. Faith and I will write you all about our journey. We met according to programme, and arrived here day before yesterday. Next month we go to Robert's. Theodora says I must leave a little room for her. How is Jessie? I want her to go back with me next year, if you can spare her."

Then came Theodora's part:

"If the rest of you were only here! We are having such a happy time. I am glad the girls think my Donnie's eyes are like Donald's. Dear mother, I never half knew how good you were till I had a child of my own, *and felt how unfit* I am to be to him what you were to

us. When I think what a self-sacrificing life Faith is living, and see what responsibilities Miriam can shoulder, and how much they are both accomplishing, I feel as if my happy life amounted to nothing beside theirs."

Here the penmanship abruptly changed to that of Colonel Rolfe.

"I can't allow my girl to talk any such nonsense. I have sent her to put on her things for a drive, and in the meanwhile I will finish her letter. No man thinks more of his sisters than I do; they are noble girls, and doing a grand, good work in the world; but as to Theodora's being 'nothing beside it,' it is no such thing. If she thinks it a little thing to be the very heart of my life, it would not be modest for me to dispute it; but she can't make it out a little thing to raise this baby to be such a man as she will. And then she is felt as a power already in our little city. Society here is in that plastic state that feels the touch of every hand, and a strong, earnest Christian woman, with a magnetic power of influence, like her, is a blessing. No one knows as I do the beauty of her daily life, but many feel it. She has created a happy home 'which sheds its quiet light afar for those who else were homeless.'"

In this new home, Donald, first of the young Rolfes, opened his eyes, and Theodora began a new chapter of her life, to her more wonderful and interesting than all the rest.

"*She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.*"

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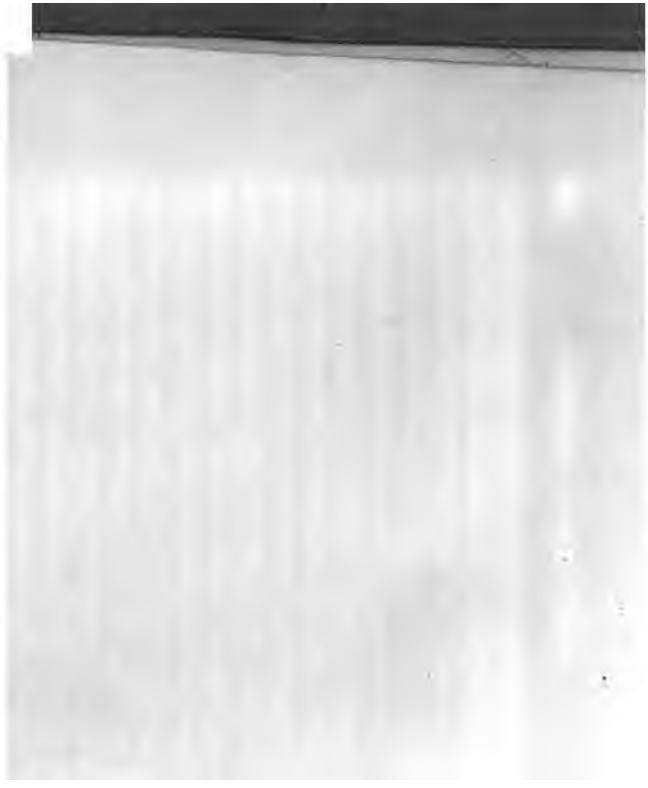

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